

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES

Notes of Recent Exposition

THE size of an explosive is no test of its dynamic power, and the size of a book is no indication of the possible effect that it may have. In a mere pamphlet of no more than thirty-one pages Professor Nels F. S. FERRÉ¹ has written a book which may well be an explosive destruction of the traditional missionary message and a creative reconstruction of it which may well be of incalculable importance.

Missionary endeavour is to-day faced with a new situation, a new mood, and the necessity for a new theology. In missionary endeavour there are three possible attitudes. There is the *pre-critical* attitude, which refuses to accept the advances of science and scholarship, and which cannot win 'competently educated modern man'. There is the *critical* attitude, which 'lacks the conviction to communicate the Christian faith as final revelation'. There is the *post-critical* attitude, which combines firm faith and the intellectually open mind. 'Post-critical Christians eschew both the dogmatism of having all the answers and the indefiniteness of those who have no central answer.'

There is a new missionary situation to-day. There is a resurgence of the non-Christian religions. This is partly defensive, and partly the result of the stimulus of scientific discovery and of world-wide communications. It is partly the result of the world situation. 'Fear stalks all people and death is a potent matrix for religious reassessment.' The presentation of the missionary message has been so pre-critical that it has provoked an inevitable reaction. 'Strong strands in traditional theology are immoral in their conception and repulsive to any morally sensitive mature person.' And it is true that, apart from the basic Christian presuppositions, the non-Christian religions have much to say. 'Judaism continues to live because of its sacred insistence on monotheism and the universal meaning of its election. Islam also

¹ *The Atonement and Mission* (Essays on Mission No. 2); London Missionary Society, 2s. 6d. net.

derives its strength from its devoted monotheism and its strong synthesis of ultimate obedience with practical community and personal life. Hinduism makes justice and freedom central to life, expanding its faith to include all life and to hitch on to ultimate reality beyond the evanescence of earthly existence. Buddhism, steeped in compassion, faces the pessimism of human experience with the promise of release and consummation beyond human grasp. Confucianism stresses the basic loyalties in this life in an emphasis which is becoming indigenous to much Christian thinking of the modern world.' Nationalism makes it difficult for Christianity even to penetrate into certain countries. Marxism offers itself as a religion. But, it must be noted, if the economic and political analyses of Marxism are taken away, its metaphysical and religious pre-suppositions are not at variance with Christianity. 'The greatest dissolvent of all faith is science.' And yet 'science and philosophy have been strong correctives of faith, cleansing it of inadequate ways of thinking and of immoral doctrines'.

In answer to this, Professor FERRÉ says, neither Fundamentalism nor Liberalism has anything effective to say. Tillich offers a Christ who is 'the revealer of God and the Ground of Being'. 'Jesus is the Christ because he refused at any time to identify himself with God, thereby letting the unconditional shine unobscured through his life and teaching into conditioned existence.' 'The finite in Jesus became transparent to the infinite.' Bultmann offers a religion emptied of the transcendent. Barth essentially fails to come to terms with modern science. Something new is needed.

Professor FERRÉ sees three elements as necessary in the new theology—(1) the priority of creation, (2) the generality of law, (3) a centred universalism. The sharing of God's divine life began in creation. Creation was not an act of necessity on the part of God. It is an act of pure love, not of necessity. Law is that which seeks to beget right relationships; the ultimate right relationship is love;

and all valid law must prepare for that relationship of love. 'Law is a tutor unto Christ who is the fulfilment of right relations, but also a tutor in Christ since in him there is ever creative growth in right relations.' Law, as Calvin saw, 'enlightens love'. Now in this aspect law is universal. 'In this sense each people has an Old Testament in its own religion.' It is not necessary to begin with a Jewish symbolism and mythology. In Christ this love of God comes, and 'the nature of love is never to produce sameness or tameness. Love glories in creative difference'.

Any doctrine of the Atonement which has missionary thrust must do three things—(1) it must define God as self-sufficient love, (2) it must open the meaning of history as pedagogical process, (3) it must proclaim reconciliation as inaugurated eschatology.

If God is self-sufficient love, if He loves not out of need, but out of nature, then the Incarnation is completely in character. And that love of God is centred in the historical act of the Atonement. All things are designed to bring man to the realisation of God's all-loving purpose. 'Nature is the medium of God's cosmic pedagogy.' 'History is the outworking of human choices.' The missionary message must be 'a fully universal and moral gospel motivated by love'. The old fear motive will not do. There is a heaven and there is a hell, but ultimately 'the hardest task for heaven, but its final glory, is to empty hell'.

The coming of Christ, the life made possible in Christ are inaugurated eschatology. 'God's story with man has begun, but Christ is the ending of the beginning and the beginning of the end. With him came a new age, in some having but mostly in hoping. He is the token of man's full potential within the life of God.'

Basically this book is a challenge to rethink everything in terms of the love and judgment of God in Jesus Christ. It is a challenge to rethink and restate the Christian message. 'Our Judeo-Christian theologies cramp the fuller missionary witness. They must be mostly crushed out and abandoned.' It is a challenge to launch out into the deeps of the meaning of the love of God. It is a challenge to grasp the full meaning of the Atonement, and to see in it the inaugurated eschatology in which the purpose of God is being fulfilled. We would that everyone would read this book. We believe that Dr. FERRÉ has said things that need to be said. There are many who will recoil from this book. Even so, they ought

to read it, for this is a book which compels a man to think and to rethink the gospel which he preaches or teaches or seeks to live in any part of the world.

The Cato Lecture, arranged in connexion with the gatherings of the triennial Methodist Conference in Australia, was delivered this year by the Rev. Frederic GREEVES, M.A., Principal of Didsbury College, Bristol, under the title, *Theology and the Cure of Souls*.¹ Principal GREEVES is a tutor both in Systematic Theology and in Pastoral Theology, and his experience, both as tutor and as a circuit minister in the Methodist Church, has compelled him to realize the essential link between the two. Academic theology can become unreal and remote unless its relevance for the pastoral work of the minister is constantly borne in mind; and pastoral practice needs continually to be reinforced by an accurate and clear-minded understanding of the essential doctrines of the Christian Faith. It is to emphasize this twofold truth that this book was written.

It should be understood that by 'theology' Principal GREEVES does not mean the somewhat abstruse knowledge of obscure arguments from the past over forgotten doctrinal issues which may enable a man to gain a University degree. He means rather an understanding of the fundamental message of the New Testament as it came to be expounded in the developing thought of the Church. An intelligent grasp of this, and of its practical bearing on our human lives and experiences is an essential for one who seeks to help men and women to find the Christian answer to their intellectual, emotional and spiritual problems.

It may seem a little odd at first to find a Free Church minister choosing the phrase 'The Cure of Souls' as part of the title of his book, but Principal GREEVES stoutly defends his use of it. He reminds us that it is a convenient English translation of the Latin phrase *cura animarum*, and that 'cure' is to be understood as representing the Latin *cura*. It, therefore, bears a double meaning, firstly 'care', and, secondly 'cure'. The word must be understood in both these senses. It is emphasized that it lies within the province of our faith to 'cure' (not only to 'care for') those who suffer from many of the ills that afflict human life to-day. Man is both body and mind, and his troubles spring from both body and mind. The cure of his troubles must nearly always be 'psychosomatic'. But the word 'soul' is here used, and used deliberately. 'We need the word "soul"', he writes, 'in order that we may be reminded of

¹ Epworth Press: 22s. 6d. net.

man's relationship to God and of his need of God. . . . It is because by forgetting what "soul" represents we misconceive the nature and needs of both body and mind, that the cure of souls has its distinctive place alongside physical and psychiatric healing.'

Principal GREEVES gives illustrations of how Christian doctrine, rightly understood, is important for spiritual and moral health. 'The doctrine of the tri-unity of God . . . which is the climax of Christian belief is the doctrine which is of supreme importance for Christian living.' He quotes D. M. Baillie: 'The God who was incarnate in Christ dwells in us through the Holy Spirit; and that is the secret of the Christian life'; and proceeds to expound the claim. 'The pastor will need to help people to replace their false image of God with the likeness of the Christ whom they already seek to follow. . . . There is often an unrecognized conflict between belief in the Redeemer's goodness and an idea of the indifference (or worse) of the Creator.' The work of the Holy Spirit is to be discerned in 'some unexpected goodness in our own or another's life', 'when some moral victory has been won', 'when from unbelief we come suddenly or slowly to sure trust and confidence in Christ', or 'when the wonder of true fellowship becomes a vivid reality to a small group or to a great assembly of Christians, or between those of different races, colours, temperaments or (even) denominations'. Other doctrines, such as 'full salvation' and 'the nature of the Church', are shown to have their importance for providing effective help which a pastor should be able to offer to his people.

Part III. of the book is entitled 'From Pastoral Experience to Theology' and deals with some aspects of theological thought which are forced upon the pastor's attention as the result of his contact with the spiritual needs of his people. In this section there is included much wise counsel on problems which arise in pastoral practice. There is, for instance, the emptiness in many people's hearts at what they feel—perhaps without fully admitting it—to be the meaninglessness of the world they live in, and their own lives as part of it; there is the life lived in undoubted outward respectability, but with no conscious relationship to God; there is the widespread, deep 'anxiety' which gnaws at our vitals. This 'anxiety' is the besetting ailment (or sin?) of our time, but our Christian faith offers a cure for it, because it offers 'happiness'. 'Happiness is one of the characteristics of the Christian life. . . . That Jesus came to make us happy is not made plain in every presentation of the Gospel. . . . Happiness is a by-product of

a right relationship with God, with other people, and with ourselves. . . . One of the many requisites of a sound pastoral theology is a positive account of the meaning of blessedness.'

Principal GREEVES also pleads for a realistic and fearless attitude to death, in the confidence of the Christian answer to it, instead of the panicky dread of it as an unspeakable horror which should hardly be admitted to exist. He speaks of the 'pathetic attempts that are made to cover up the reality of death . . . men and women can become old within a Church that does not prepare them to die; this is without parallel in Christian history'.

Clearly what is contained in this book is relevant particularly to ministers, but it is recognized that this pastoral concern and oversight is also the responsibility of lay people within the Church. Principal GREEVES urges that lay people will be more ready to accept their share in this responsibility, and that ministers and clergy will more readily welcome lay people who are ready to take their share. Clearly it is the lay people who have the more frequent contacts with others outside the Church, but to represent our faith adequately to such people is no easy task. 'Preaching a sermon to a Christian congregation is a comparatively simple task compared with holding a conversation about Christian matters with an unbeliever in a factory or an office.' Here laymen and ministers must co-operate. The minister must help to equip his lay people with the 'pastoral theology' they need to use these contacts to good purpose, and lay people should be prepared to be helped to become 'pastors' of their unconverted neighbours.

The author has also some salutary words for those who are ordained ministers within the Church: 'In England Christian ministers have to win their way back into public recognition. Many of us are aware of this, and some are tempted to speed that task by seeking some kind of status or prestige. Were we to succeed in this, we should have failed in our real purpose. When men and women discover that a minister lives in close touch with God, is able to help them to love God, cares for them with something of the care of Jesus, and ministers to them in holy things, they do not find it difficult to think of him as "the minister".' 'Our preaching must be from pastoral care to pastoral need—that is our sermons must spring out of and be directed to the needs of those whom we know and care for. . . . Yet our preaching must be determined not by our pastoral experience, but by the gospel, or else we shall follow, rather than lead, the flock.'

Thomas and the Synoptic Gospels

BY THE REVEREND R. McL. WILSON, B.D., Ph.D., ST. MARY'S COLLEGE, ST. ANDREWS

THE publication some months ago of the Coptic text of the Gospel of Thomas, together with an English translation, has at last made this document available in language 'understood of the people'. It has also, no doubt, been the cause of some bewilderment among those who do not possess a clue to the interpretation of these 'secret words', and has almost certainly disappointed those who expected something much more 'sensational'. One (anonymous) reviewer indeed dismissed it as 'a farrago of nonsense', thereby revealing his own failure to discern its significance. It is perhaps unfortunate that this document in particular should have been released to the general public without a scrap of commentary, although the scholar cannot but be thankful to have access to the text in such a convenient form. The gap has to some extent been filled through the publication in the Fontana Series of a Commentary by Professors Grant and Freedman, but much more remains to be done before all the questions raised by the new work can be considered satisfactorily resolved. There is also, it may be added, a French Commentary by J. Doresse, published in 1958, and a considerable number of articles have already appeared. It may be assumed that their number will now steadily increase.

One problem already much discussed is that of the relation of the Gospel of Thomas to the canonical Gospels, and particularly to the Synoptics. The Fourth Gospel is much less prominent, but parallels and allusions to the Synoptics occur on every page. Here there is already some difference of opinion among the scholars who have been at work on the text. Many of the earlier studies tended to favour the view that Thomas is at least in part independent of our Gospels, but the more recent trend has been towards the opinion that the author used the canonical books. Thus Grant and Freedman recognize the possibility that Thomas may have used traditions underlying our Gospels, but conclude that, assuming he wrote about the middle of the second century, it is more probable that he relied on written documents.

The latest champion of dependence is Professor H. K. McArthur, who in a recent short note (THE EXPOSITORY TIMES, lxxi. 286) has maintained that Thomas 'is demonstrably dependent on the Synoptics'. His argument, according to a footnote, is only part of a longer study, which may

materially strengthen his case, but pending its publication we must confine our consideration to the arguments here advanced. Professor McArthur's note is important because it focuses attention upon the crucial issue: if Thomas is based on independent traditions, whether oral or written, its version, as McArthur says, deserves almost equal consideration with the canonical accounts, and moreover some of the non-Synoptic material may be equally early; on the other hand, if Thomas is dependent it is significant only for later exegesis and interpretation of the Synoptic material, and the primitive character and possible authenticity of the non-Synoptic material becomes so much the less probable. To anticipate, it would seem that the main objection to McArthur's view is that it unduly simplifies the issues. In matters of this kind it is frequently not a question of a simple choice between black and white, but rather of the recognition of several shades of grey.

To begin with, Professor McArthur has overlooked at least two sayings which might have provided additional evidence. In logion 16, for example, the end of a Lucan saying (Lk 12⁵¹⁻⁵⁴) is, as Guillaumont observed, indispensable for the understanding of the version in Thomas:

Perhaps men are thinking that I am come to cast peace on the world, and they do not know that I am come to cast divisions upon the earth, fire, sword, war. For there shall be five in a house. There shall be three against two, and two against three, the father against the son, and the son against the father.

Luke, it has been observed, has five persons: father, mother, son and daughter, and daughter-in-law—the younger generation against the old.

In logion 78, again, we find the words:

For what reason did ye come forth into the desert? To see a reed shaken by the wind? And to see a man clothed in soft raiment?

Here the Synoptic parallels are Mt 11⁷⁻⁸ and Lk 7²⁴⁻²⁵ which, as the commentaries show, have been the cause of some difficulty to translators, since it is possible to punctuate either before or after the verb 'to see'. Both the Bohairic and the Sahidic versions, like A.V., punctuate *after*, Thomas clearly and unmistakably *before*, a fact guaranteed by the position of the second 'to see'

and also by the substitution of 'why, for what reason' for the initial 'what'. This however points to a written document, since the division of the sentence would be clear if the words were spoken; in other words, our Gospels *or something like them*.

It is here that I must join issue with Professor McArthur, since it is not yet by any means clear that the alternative is to be rejected. He frankly states at the outset the three presuppositions on which his argument is based, but these presuppositions in fact appear to beg the whole question. The first, that Matthew and Luke used Mark, would indeed be generally accepted by modern scholars, although there are a few exceptions, but B. H. Streeter long ago gave warning against the 'unconscious assumptions' (a) that Matthew and Luke had no other sources comparable to the 'Big Two'; (b) that a hypothesis which reduces the number of sources to a minimum is more scientific; and (c) that the same saying is not likely to have been repeated by more than one independent authority. Professor McArthur assumes that since Matthew and Luke used Mark their versions of Marcan material reflect editorial revision, not independent and parallel traditions; and that if Thomas reflects Lucan or Matthean versions of Marcan material he must have used Luke or Matthew. The discussion, in short, is developed on much too narrow a basis, and does not take into account the other possibilities which require to be examined. An interesting parallel is presented, incidentally, in Professor Hunter's recent articles on the Fourth Gospel, in which he notes that the long debate on the relation between John and the Synoptics is now leading to the view that John had access to traditions of a Synoptic type. The same might conceivably be true of Thomas, and there would seem to be grounds for the view advanced by Professor Quispel, who has suggested a source unknown to Mark and Matthew but common to Thomas and to Luke. A reader of the present article might assume that the authorities mentioned were the only sources at the disposal of the author; but he would be mistaken. A book now in the hands of the publisher will provide evidence of acquaintance with works by Puech, Leipoldt, Garitte, Cerfaux, Fitzmyer, Bauer and others.¹ It is not of course suggested that Thomas set about his work in the manner of a modern scholar—merely that his possible use of our Gospels does *not* preclude his employment of other sources.

McArthur's 'most striking illustration' is the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen, which

'includes elements distinctive of Luke's editorial revision of Mark'. What is really striking is, however, the fact that Thomas reproduces exactly the form postulated as original by C. H. Dodd, long before the Nag Hammadi library was ever heard of: a three-fold sending of messengers reaching its climax in the sending of the son. This has been allegorized in our Gospels, so as to present the servants as the prophets and the son as Jesus, and moreover Matthew and Luke make the husbandmen first cast the son out of the vineyard before they kill him, since Jesus was slain without the gate. It is remarkable that an editor summarizing our Gospels should have omitted just these details, when he adds the reflection of the master, 'Perhaps they did not know him', to parallel that about the son. If however logion 65 is independent, it is interesting to find in logion 66 a saying about the stone which the builders rejected. If Thomas is dependent, we ought to be able to find an explanation for the changes.

The primary reason for the assumption of independence by those scholars who first examined the new document was precisely the difficulty of accounting for the variations. Only in a few cases do we have a complete saying which is closely parallel to the version in our Gospels. Most of them have been modified in one way or another, by expansion, compression or re-grouping. Not only so, but the sayings occur very often in a completely different order. Now if Thomas used our Gospels we should expect either that he would assemble the material under topical heads, or in some other way that would enable us to discern his purpose, or that he would follow the Synoptic order. In point of fact he does neither. The only kind of linking so far detected is by key-words, two or three sayings being rather loosely connected through the occurrence in each of the same term or concept. Professor McArthur rightly notes that all seven of the parables of the Kingdom found in Mt 13 occur in Thomas, which would, he suggests, be a curious coincidence if the latter were independent. His own list however (logia 8, 9, 20, 57, 76, 96, 109) reveals that they are widely scattered throughout the document, and moreover examination will show that the order is completely different. Only two of these parables come together, and one of these, the Parable of the Fisherman (logion 8), is completely different from its Matthean 'parallel'. To follow Matthew's order, we have first the Sower (logion 9), then the Tares (57), then the Mustard Seed (20), followed by the Leaven (96) and the twin parables of the Treasure (109) and the Pearl (76), and finally the Dragnet (8). The interpretations supplied in Matthew are missing, but links have been detected between some other

¹ For detailed documentation and fuller discussion of various points reference may be made to this book, which will be published, it is hoped, later this year.

sayings in Thomas and certain other verses in this chapter: 38 and Mt 13¹⁷; 41 and 13¹²; 62 and 13¹¹; 88 and 13¹⁷⁻⁴¹. In some cases, however, it is no more than an allusion, perhaps involving only a single word. The familiar formula 'He that hath ears, let him hear', one form of which occurs in Mt 13⁹ and ⁴³, appears six times in Thomas, now in its 'Matthean' form, now in that favoured by Mark and Luke, but this would seem to have become a proverbial saying. In his edition of the Berlin Gnostic papyrus, for example, Dr. Till supplies references at its first occurrence only.

That some of these parables occur only in Matthew apart from Thomas is worthy of note, but when we consider the evidence as a whole it cannot be called conclusive. Why did Thomas break up the chapter? Why did he re-arrange the order of the parables? These are the questions to which we must seek an answer. Now we know from comparison with Luke that Matthew has a tendency to assemble his material into large blocks of discourse. No very obvious tendencies have yet been discovered in Thomas, and it is at least possible that we have here a pointer to the independence of the new Gospel. The situation could, it seems, be met on the assumption that both Thomas and Matthew had access to the same cycle of tradition, in which these parables were still separate. Matthew has grouped them, according to his usual practice, whereas Thomas has introduced them in a completely different order into his own work. It may be noted that although the Sower and the Mustard Seed appear in the same chapter in Matthew and in Mark, they are in different chapters in Luke.

On the other hand, if Thomas did have access independently to the same tradition it was probably at a later stage. Some of the parables might perhaps be claimed as still fairly primitive, but others bear the marks of development. The best example is possibly the Great Supper (logion 64), which introduces four defaulting guests and a completely different set of excuses. Here we seem to have a parable on its way from an agricultural environment into a more commercial and urban setting. Other sayings, again, show a rounding and conventionalizing, which the Form-Critics have taught us to recognize as marks of a later stage of development. The names of the characters, details of place and time, everything that serves to identify a saying with a particular occasion or a definite situation, all these are smoothed away, and only the saying remains more or less intact, a proverbial aphorism sometimes applied to situations completely different from that in which it was originally spoken. So in Thomas the people who bring their questions

are often anonymous, although they may be identified in our Gospels.

To this must be added the fact that the document as we now have it is a Gnostic work. Puech has argued that it was neither exclusively nor in origin the work of a Gnostic, but allowance must be made for Gnostic adaptation and re-interpretation of a writing possibly in its pristine form much nearer to the Synoptic type. This is an aspect to which sufficient attention has not yet been given, in part at least because of the nature of our resources. The new Gospel is quite unique in form among the extant documents of early Christianity, and material for comparison must be laboriously dug out from the writings of the Fathers and from such early Gnostic texts as have been published. The rest of the Nag Hammadi library may well have much to teach us here, but so far only one text apart from Thomas is available in English and even some of the older works must be sought in German translations or in the original tongues; which for the British scholar inevitably makes progress slow.

A further indication that part at least of Thomas may be independent of our Gospels lies in the fact that parallels to some of the peculiar readings in this document have been found in other sources, such as the Clementines and the various forms of the Diatessaron. These however are not all of equal weight, and must be carefully examined. In some cases the apparent parallel may be due to the idiom of the languages involved, and not to independent tradition at all. One logion, again, is quoted by Clement of Alexandria as from the Gospel according to the Hebrews, while others have parallels in the extant fragments of the Gospel of the Egyptians. This has led some scholars to assume that Thomas is dependent upon these two documents, but our resources here are scarcely such as to warrant confidence in this respect. We know all too little both about these and about such documents as the Gospel of the Nazarenes and that of the Ebionites, and in any case, if this assumption is correct, it would merely push back the whole problem. We should then require to ask what is the relation, if any, between these documents and our Gospels.

The main point is this, that a satisfactory and final solution of the problems raised by the Gospel of Thomas must take account of the document as a whole. Professor McArthur in his note points to four examples, upon which he bases his conclusion. His fuller study may present others, but it must be said that it would be no less possible to select other passages, and, on the basis of convenient presuppositions, to demonstrate that Thomas is independent. Every possibility must be considered, every avenue explored.

To rule out the possibility of independence at this stage, as Professor McArthur seeks to do, is as unjustifiable as to assume it without further investigation. In point of fact, the problem would seem to be much more complex.

The one thing certain is that Thomas goes back at least to the second century, although how much further back it can be traced is open to question. It may have been known to Irenaeus, or to the author of 2 Clement; or they may have known one of its sources. The date favoured by most of those who have written about it is somewhere about the middle of the century—Puech, for example, suggests about A.D. 140, or perhaps a little later. When Oxyrhynchus papyri were discovered at the beginning of this century, however, the first editors were inclined to date the saying not *later* than 140, and with this Evelyn White agreed. An important point here is the comparative absence of the Johannine element, more particularly in a Gnostic work. This suggests either an early date or an area in which Johannine thought was in the air but the Fourth Gospel not yet known; but the earlier we date the collection the less likely does it become that the author had access to many sources. If he used our Gospels he certainly used all three Synoptics. McArthur and others have noted a preference for Lucan material, but some of the parables are peculiar to Matthew among our Gospels and there are traces of material peculiar to Mark. At least one saying has been assigned to the Gospel of the Hebrews, several others to the Gospel of the Egyptians, and some may derive from the Gospel of the Nazarenes or that of the Ebionites; others again appear to show knowledge of the Pauline Epistles or of Revelation.

Here we must seek to understand the 'author' and his ways of working. It would, I think, be completely wrong to imagine him as sitting in a study surrounded by books, patiently extracting a word here, a saying there, piecing his Gospel together for the mystification of the twentieth century. Authors generally write for a purpose, and their works have a beginning, a middle and an end; we can trace the development of the narrative, the progress of the argument. Of this there is nothing in Thomas. Particular sayings, if they occurred in the context of an early homily or treatise, might be explained by association of ideas; if they occurred with some frequency we might imagine a man familiar with our Gospels, who wrote rather freely and from memory, weaving elements from different passages into a new synthesis of his own. But such an explanation will scarcely account for the phenomena presented by Thomas. The most probable explanation is

that the collection grew, that different elements were added from diverse sources at different times, by different people, perhaps in different places. It may be that a fuller investigation of the Gnostic affinities of the document will disclose a definite purpose which at the moment is still concealed, but in the present state of our knowledge the best working hypothesis so far advanced is probably that summed up succinctly by Otto Piper, who suggests that it may go back to a Jewish-Christian group, probably in Egypt (Puech and others have argued for a Syrian origin), who for their teaching relied originally on the oral tradition of the primitive Church but made their own selection from the sayings of Jesus and subsequently used the canonical Gospels to supplement their collection. In view of the gnosticizing tendencies which some scholars find in 'Jewish Christian' circles, it is not difficult to envisage the adoption of such a document by a Gnostic, or a Gnostic group, who adapted and expanded it to suit their own purposes. The problem is to find ways and means of confirming such a theory, to identify the elements which go back to the original nucleus, and so to trace at least to some extent the history of the collection. The Oxyrhynchus fragments appear to represent an earlier stage than Thomas, but they are not simply to be taken as the Greek basis from which the Coptic was translated; nor are they a more orthodox version of which the Coptic is a Gnostic redaction. 'Simple' solutions are sometimes frankly dangerous.

One line of approach is that followed by J. B. Bauer, who has examined a number of the sayings to see if it is possible to find for them a *Sitz im Leben Jesu*. Another is the investigation of the Gnostic element, effectively begun by Grant and Freedman, who have demonstrated the generally Gnostic background of our present Gospel and have pointed to Naassene and other parallels. Only when every aspect has been thoroughly studied shall we be in a position even to consider the formulation of more or less definitive conclusions, and on some points it may be that no real solution will be possible. In the meantime it may be urged that the investigation should be conducted on as broad a base as possible, and that no line of approach should be arbitrarily or prematurely excluded. It must be admitted that knowledge of our Gospels at some stage appears highly probable, but the question is: at what stage? If the collection grew, what appears to be borrowing from our Gospels might be the result of later redaction. At all events, the possibility that some part at least of the Gospel of Thomas goes back to independent tradition should not yet be ruled out.

Religious Education

Missionary Material and the Modern Situation

BY MARGARET AVERY, O.B.E., B.A., S.Th., LONDON

THE story of the Christian Church is an essential part of any scheme of religious education. Whatever the denomination to which he owes allegiance the Christian is the heir of all the ages, drawing his spiritual vitality from past generations whose outlook and worship may appear to have been very different from his own. He inherits the martyrdoms and controversies of the early centuries, the heroic pioneering of the missionaries who converted Europe, the faith and art of the Middle Ages, the new insights of the Reformation and the great outward expansion of the Church in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the religious revivals that preceded and accompanied it. He can lay claim to St. Francis of Assisi and John Wesley, to St. Thomas Aquinas and William Temple, to Ignatius Loyola and William Carey. He knows that he belongs to a great company at one in Christ, in whom distinctions of century, race, status or sex count for nothing.

Without this vision of the Church, 'rooted in eternity, spread out in time and space and terrible as an army with banners',¹ all missionary lessons lack point. The term 'missionary material' covers the story of the Church in recent or fairly recent times with special reference to what it has done overseas to evangelize the heathen and establish itself among them. Strictly speaking, the term 'missionary' applies to Christian saints in every century, to St. Paul and St. Aidan, to Raymond Lull and St. Francis Xavier no less than to David Livingstone and Alexander Mackay; this must be so, for all these knew themselves to be called by God. But it is convenient to use the word in its limited sense as long as missionary material is seen to be the record of the modern phase of an age-long process.

Again, the teacher's aim in presenting missionary material remains the same in every generation. The urgency of the gospel message and the unceasing activity of the Holy Spirit are apprehended, however dimly, in the stories of men and women who left all to serve God in remote and hard places. The stories are interesting not only because of this heroic quality but because of the strangeness of their setting and the variety of character and custom that they present. They are both exciting and inspiring. Sometimes the best way to bring the Acts of the Apostles to life is to

begin with a modern missionary story and then work back to the New Testament. Pupils of limited imagination can be stimulated to recognize that St. Paul was as adventurous as any modern missionary and preached the same message with a similar technique.

Nevertheless, missionary material is less easy to use in the modern situation than it was a generation or so ago. Text-books and collections of stories need to be scrutinized carefully, for some of them present a set-up which no longer exists. The white missionary is seen as a superior person bringing the white man's superior religion to uncivilized heathen whom he sought to make replicas of himself. Schools had a Western curriculum, churches were built in a pseudo-Gothic style and devout ladies made stout garments on Western lines to clothe the heathen overseas. Far be it from any modern Christian to decry the splendid work that laid the foundations of young churches in many lands. Those who laboured were the salt of the earth. They did indeed bring light into darkness, healing into the haunts of disease and a great heritage of knowledge to illiterate peoples. In civilized India or China they demonstrated a new care for every individual as well as a new faith. British missionaries had behind them the prestige of a great empire; adventurous leadership was part of their heritage no less than integrity of character and personal standards forged through centuries of Christian civilization.

Now much is changed. The nominally Christian powers of the West, drained of manpower and resources in two World Wars, have lost their prestige and much of their power and moral authority. The stress on nationalism after the First World War caught the imagination of young men in Africa and the East, reinforcing tendencies already set in motion by the missionaries themselves when they trained the minds of their converts, widened their outlook and stirred in them new hopes and ambitions. There was an upsurge of racial self-consciousness and resentment of the power exercised by the great colonial powers. Young Christian leaders trained in the universities of Britain and America took back with them not a richer Christian faith but in many cases a purely materialistic outlook or a bias towards Communism. Any one who has listened to the bitter talk among young West African

¹ C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*.

students enjoying in Britain the best we have to offer will recognize how violent is the tide that has turned against the white West. Unhappily Western civilization and Christianity have been identified. A Western missionary is primarily a foreigner. He has been driven out of China, severely restricted in India and his influence in Africa is on the wane. How long will ambitious African dictators in newly independent states allow autonomy to Christian schools and hospitals? Christian missions are in the doldrums. So what are we to teach?

There is much that we can do. Firstly, there is no need to throw aside the heroic stories of the great pioneers of the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries. They had much to give and they gave it with splendid devotion. Such men as Carey and Morrison, Livingstone and Mackay, Hannington and Schweitzer, and women like Mary Slessor or Mary Bird show how varied are the human gifts that can be used to the glory of God. It is true that jungles and cannibal islands, thanks to the cinema and television, have lost something of their glamour but the quality of greatness can be felt through the story material if it is well told or well written. Heroism has not entirely lost its appeal to the young and in these biographies the vivid pioneers who display it are often as 'tough' as the unpleasant killer of the popular depraved comics.

Secondly, with older pupils the limitations of the earlier missionary technique can be frankly acknowledged. Possibly 'the heathen in his blindness' did not 'bow down to wood and stone' as often as he was believed to do. More might have been done to build upon his religion rather than to destroy it. Good tribal customs might have been incorporated into the life of the young indigenous churches, as Miss Mabel Shaw used them in her school (see *God's Candlelights*). To-day children in a mission school in Borneo wear native dress.

Again, full use may be made of stories of pioneers of other races who have helped to evangelize their own people. Their devotion and ability are the highest proof of the effectiveness of missionary work. There is good material relating to Kagawa, Aggrey of Africa, the Sadhu Sundar Singh and other outstanding Christians.

It is important, too, that our missionary material should be free from colour prejudice or lack of courtesy in referring to races other than our own. Our missionary stories should be told graciously with truth and frankness. There is no need to present the black man as a paragon replacing the white paragon of a past age. But any story that has a patronizing flavour is worse than useless and theologically objectionable.

We need also up-to-date information about the political, social and religious background of the country where the story is set and to make our pupils understand how the old and the new rub shoulders at every turn. At a Conference in 1954 an address was given by an East African delegate (the product of a mission school) whose command of English and elegant clothes put most of his audience to shame. His cousins were the Chief's official hunters and wore leopard skins! Africans from primitive villages work in the copper belt; African Chiefs have refrigerators in their palaces; Dyak boys whose homes are at much the same stage as those of our Neolithic ancestors sail their canoes up the river to the high school. Two girls from Borneo have recently acquired university degrees.

It is becoming clear that teachers of upper forms need some knowledge of comparative religion, especially of living religions. The story of the Church's mission overseas often provokes the question: 'Have not these people a perfectly good religion of their own?' The teacher needs a clear grasp of what Christianity has in common with other world religions and in what respects it is unique.

Another aspect of our work is the ability to guide boys and girls who are considering service overseas. In addition to the evangelistic and pastoral work of the ordained ministry there are many openings for Christian service in professions and trades, both through the missionary societies and under the Government. The Christian witness and Christian skill of ordinary laymen and women are invaluable. A recent pamphlet, *The Purpose of Missionary Education To-day*, published by the Conference of British Missionary Societies (2 Eaton Gate, London, S.W.1) will be found very useful and the Secretary of the Conference will gladly supply information about careers.

Finally, the only way to teach the story of the Church to-day is to recognize that here or overseas it is what it was in its first days—a minority movement in a pagan or semi-pagan setting. To some extent our British society is permeated by the Christianity of centuries but Christian students from overseas often unlearn their faith more effectively here than in the pagan darkness they left behind. We still have much to give the young churches overseas; there are many things they can teach us. For the Church is one and the Church's front line anywhere.

Book List

1. Pamphlets and information published by the Conference of British Missionary Societies, 2 Eaton Gate, London, S.W.1.

2. Missionary publications of the Edinburgh House Press and of various missionary societies.

3. The section on 'The History of Christianity (a) Church History (b) in the Modern World' in the *Bibliography* [1959] published by the Institute of Christian Education, 46 Gordon Square, London, W.C.1.

4. Particularly useful are :

Phyllis Garlick, *Pioneers of the Kingdom* (Highway Press ; 10s. 6d.)

E. H. Hayes, Yarn Series (Religious Education Press ; 2s. and 2s. 6d.)

Eagle Omnibus Books : True Stories of Great Missionaries—6 volumes (Edinburgh House Press ; 5s. each)

Torch Biographies (S.C.M. ; 4s. 6d.)

Literature

THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

On the Authority of the Bible (S.P.C.K. ; 8s. 6d. net) is the first of a series of publications bringing together some of the occasional work of contemporary theologians. This proposal is heartily to be welcomed, for much valuable material lies almost buried away in the learned journals, as any one who browses in these fields can readily see. Indeed, we wish the publishers would go further and bring to light famous reviews of important books, as, for example, F. C. Burkitt's review of B. H. Streeter's 'Four Gospels'. The present work includes six important essays by Oxford scholars—Professor Leonard Hodgson's lecture 'God and the Bible', first delivered at King's College, London ; two sermons preached before the Oxford University on 'The Inspiration of the Bible' and 'The Bible and Tradition' by Professor C. F. Evans of Durham ; a lecture on 'Bible and Dogma' by Professor John Burnaby of Oxford ; an essay on 'The Meaning of "Biblical Theology"' by Professor Gerhard Ebeling of Zurich ; and finally a lecture on 'Wherein lies the Authority of the Bible?' by Professor D. E. Nineham of King's College, London. It will be seen that a unity of theme marks these essays. They are important because of this theme, and because they provide a cross-section of the views of a group mainly consisting of Anglican theologians connected with Oxford.

All the essays are interesting and important. Professor Hodgson reproduces in a challenging form much for which he contends in the two volumes of his Gifford Lectures for 1955-57, 'For Faith and Freedom', in particular his claim that Revelation is to be seen, not in Biblical statements, but in the 'mighty acts' of God in history, and his discussion of the eschatological element in the New Testament. Professor Evans treats the substance, instruments, and locus of revelation. He insists that 'the Scriptures are not alive except within the society which they were intended to create and recreate', and affirms that 'the desire for an infallibility short of the infallibility of God,

be it of Church or Bible, is an idolatrous lust'. In his second sermon he says, 'The more the New Testament is taken to bits the more it leads us back to a preaching, teaching, worshipping, and living Church as the background of all its parts and as the setting in which alone they come alive.' Professor Burnaby discusses the question, 'What is the nature of the connection between the canonical Scriptures and the dogmas of the Christian Church?', and Professor Ebeling inquires into the meaning and purpose of 'Biblical theology'.

In sum, the main interest of these essays is the relation of the Scriptures to the revelatory acts of God in life and history. To these acts they bear witness and they are closely inwrought with the life of the Church. It is, I think, a fair criticism to say that the Oxford Professors tell us more about what the Bible is *not* than to define, as the selected title of the series suggests, what authority it has in itself. We are left with the feeling that it is not much more than a useful handmaid of the Church, always to be honoured, but kept strictly in its place. 'Biblical theology', declares Professor Nineham, 'is a good servant but a bad master.' In reply to the question, 'Wherein does the authority of the Bible lie?', he observes that 'it is a deceptively simple question', and he bids us beware of all who claim to have a simple answer to it. 'At any rate,' he says, 'at the present stage this is a problem which *solvitur ambulando*.' The clue must be found in the figure and work of Jesus, but as we try to use that clue we shall become increasingly aware that the problem of Biblical authority cannot be cleared up in isolation. 'The authority of the Bible is inextricably connected with other authorities—the authority of the Church, of the saints, of the liturgy, the conscience and the reason.' This is finely and truly said, but what *is* the authority of the Bible? Perhaps the best answer to this question is given by Professor Burnaby when he writes: 'What gives to the writings of the New Testament their *unique* authority, an authority by which all later doctrine must consent to be controlled, is their character

as the original documents of a religion that claims to rest upon historical events. "No man cometh unto the Father but by me", said Christ. We have to accept a situation in which none of us can come to Christ but by the witness of His Apostles; and our nearest echo of that witness is in the New Testament.'

VINCENT TAYLOR

ST. IGNATIUS

A new monograph on *St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch*, by Professor Virginia Corwin of Smith College (Yale University Press and Oxford University Press; 40s. net), is to be welcomed not only for its own merits, which are many, but also because it is the first of a series of Yale Publications in Religion. Too often it has been Ignatius's misfortune to be kicked about like a football, first, in the seventeenth-century controversies over episcopacy and then in the ferocious debates about the New Testament Canon precipitated by Baur and the Tübingen school. In this book these wrangles are far distant, and the tone is tranquil and serene. It is quietly taken for granted that the seven Vossian letters are the authentic Ignatius, and there is only the briefest review of the history of Ignatian criticism. Perhaps something more than this could reasonably be expected; we want to know not only about Ignatius but about the way in which his writings have been transmitted to us and, in any event, the story of the transmission is of extraordinary interest. Professor Corwin, however, is primarily interested in Ignatius's theology, and especially in the light which is thrown upon his use of symbol and image by the new material of the Dead Sea Scrolls. She runs counter to the stream of Ignatian criticism for many years past in looking for Jewish parallels to his thought. From time to time she may overstate her case, but at least the questions she is asking are very interesting.

H. CHADWICK

APPLIED THEOLOGY

Two books currently issued by the S.C.M. provide interesting essays in what may be termed 'applied' theology, *i.e.* in the application of the theological categories to the resolution of the practical problems of every day Christian living. The first of these (Dr. E. L. Kendall, *A Living Sacrifice*; 21s. net) is a study of the meaning of Reparation, a portmanteau word which enables the author to range widely over the whole field of Christian doctrine, with particular attention given to the doctrine of the Atonement and to the

reproduction of its pattern in the life of the believer. This is a careful and competent piece of writing, revealing a sound knowledge of the Bible and an extensive acquaintance with the mediæval mystics. It is valuable, too, in that it deals sensitively with the problems of sin and suffering and relates them to worship, prayer, personal sanctification and practical Christian living. This is a book which any intelligent layman would be well advised to read, and its devotional undertones make it an excellent companion for a retreat.

The Bishop of Woolwich's collection of lectures, addresses and articles (Dr. J. A. T. Robinson, *On Being the Church in the World*; 16s. net) is by contrast provocative and never fails to stimulate. This is not the place to examine his methodology, implicit in such statements as 'the Bible says' or 'if we were really Biblical', suffice it to say that by a judicious use of Biblical exegesis he calls in question a number of over facile assumptions, *e.g.*, concerning the relation of the Church and the world or the importance of death, and provides at one and the same time a sign-post for the believer who conscientiously refuses to contract out of the world, and valuable assistance to the preacher who would speak on such difficult and elusive subjects as judgment, the second coming, religion and politics, and racial discrimination. Anyone concerned with the relevance of the gospel to the contemporary situation should read this; he may not agree with all the conclusions, but he cannot fail to clarify his own thoughts in the process of understanding.

J. G. DAVIES

THE REFORMERS

In *Prayers of the Reformers*, compiled by Professor Clyde Manschreck (Epworth Press; 10s. 6d. net), we have the prayers of the great Reformers—Luther, Calvin, Melancthon, Cranmer, Knox and many another—arranged under certain subject headings, such as 'Prayers of Confession and Penitence', 'Prayers for Forgiveness', 'Prayers at Time of Death', and many others. One very interesting and useful section is a calendar of prayer.

One of the outstanding features of these prayers is their extremely theological character. It is not altogether untrue to say that they have in them a great deal of divinity and a very little humanity. They are always the prayers of theologians and very seldom the prayers of simple people. There is one exception to that—the prayers of Melancthon. Melancthon was the most lovable of all the Reformers. It is interesting to note that 'when the sixteenth century woodcut artists sought to suggest the lovable character of the

Evangelist Luke they drew the unmistakable likeness of Melanchthon'.

One of the most useful sections of this book is the essay on 'The Meaning of Prayer in the Reformers'. For Luther prayer is 'fixing our minds upon some pressing need, desiring it with all earnestness and exercising such faith that we do not doubt that we shall be heard'. Calvin offers four great rules for prayer. (1) The heart and mind must be properly composed for entering into conversation with God. (2) In our supplications we should be conscious of our needs and ardently expect them to be fulfilled. (3) In presenting ourselves to God we must renounce every idea of our own glory, our own merits, and relinquish all confidence in ourselves, giving all the glory entirely to God. (4) Although prostrated with humility, we should nevertheless fervently pray with a certain hope of obtaining our requests. When we pray Melanchthon bids us remember five things. (1) The God we invoke. (2) The command to pray. (3) Why God hears. (4) The practical need to stimulate faith. (5) The things we desire in prayer, the first of which is reconciliation.

This is a book equally valuable for liturgy and for devotion. We know the vividness with which Luther spoke, and we should very much like the reference to the passage in which 'Luther once pictured himself as the ace trump which the Lord was holding in a game of cards with the pope'!

WILLIAM BARCLAY

CHRISTIAN INITIATION

It is an oddity of the long-standing debate on Christian Baptism that the tradition represented by the Baptist denomination has made the least contribution to the discussions. The silence is now being broken and the voices that are making themselves heard reveal a ferment of thought among the adherents of that confession. An example of the process is to be seen in the Rev. R. E. O. White's *The Biblical Doctrine of Initiation* (Hodder and Stoughton; 30s. net). Despite its very thorough documentation (chiefly of British sources), it reveals a considerable independence of judgment. The writer has a lively style; if his tongue is the pen of a ready writer, the nib not infrequently bites deep into the page!

The author endeavours to see the vistas from paths other than those well trodden. For him the most significant element of the Old Testament preparation for baptism is the Covenant idea rather than circumcision. The form of the New Testament rite is provided by proselyte baptism, mediated through John the Baptist. The baptism of Jesus is viewed as the true institution of

Christian Baptism, but the currently favoured interpretation of the Baptism as a vicarious anticipation of the Cross is sharply repudiated. Along with the kerygma of the Christ, the most constitutive factor in the shaping of the primitive Christian initiation is believed to be the primitive Christian catechesis; here the author naturally draws on the modern exponents of this approach to early Christian doctrine, notably Carrington and Selwyn, and illustrates its importance for the understanding of New Testament baptism.

The upshot of the argument is a plea for a return to the Biblical pattern of initiation. By this is not meant a general adoption of believer's baptism, as exemplified in some groups to-day; for if infant baptism witnesses in a confused manner to some important insights and values, in the writer's judgment believer's baptism sometimes obscures them altogether. For which reason the easy solution of maintaining side by side both currently practised modes of baptism, as proposed in many schemes of Church reunion, is not good enough; two impaired baptisms do not make a Biblical initiation! It is urged that the Church return to the *dynamic sacramentalism* of the earliest Church—to a baptism in which divine activity and human response meet in sacramental *action*, and in which the expressive symbolism of the primitive rite is recovered.

If the exegesis of this investigation at times falters, its strength lies in the bold strokes of its delineaments, its trenchant criticisms of our easy assumptions and above all its constructiveness. Whatever one's predilections in relation to baptism, they will require fresh assessment on a reading of this work. And what more can one hope from a baptismal treatise to-day?

G. R. BEASLEY-MURRAY

HEBREW AND GREEK THOUGHT

Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek, by the Oslo scholar Dr. Thorlief Boman, and translated by Professor J. L. Moreau, M.A., S.T.M., of Evanston, Illinois (S.C.M. 'The Library of History and Doctrine'; 21s. net), is an important book. It was first published in 1952 and the translation is from the second (German) edition revised by the author up to January of this year.

The publisher's 'blurb' says that 'the great Oslo scholar does not ask from them (his readers) much previous linguistic equipment'. It may be so, but even expert Hebraists will find here much that, if Dr. Boman is right, they had never discerned, much with which they will probably want to disagree and which they will need to ponder at leisure. In fact, only those who are reasonably competent in Hebrew, Greek, philosophy and

psychology will find the book easy reading. This is not to warn the unlearned off it. On the contrary, they will learn a great deal from it, and for those who are interested in the general subject of Hebrew-Greek relations—and every Christian teacher should be—it is almost a *must*.

Particularly interesting are Dr. Boman's all too brief discussions of the problems of history and the concept of creation as they were approached by Hebrew and Greek respectively. These sections appear only in the English edition and are in response to 'the majority of reviewers', who 'felt especially keenly the lack of some clarification' of them.

The book contains five main sections: (1) Dynamic and Static Thinking; (2) Impression and Appearance; (3) Time and Space; (4) Symbolism and Instrumentalism; (5) Logical Thinking and Psychological Understanding. Under these headings, as we should expect: (1) 'Hebrew thinking is dynamic and Greek static'; (2) 'The Israelite poets are impressionists; they repeat only their impressions'—'The Greeks considered reality as an objective, given quantity with which our senses . . . bring us into contact'; (3) 'As space was the given thought-form for the Greeks, so for the Hebrews it was time'; (4) 'If a thing is a symbol for an Israelite, it expresses a dynamic property, while symbol for the Greek expresses a meaning or true being'; (5) 'Greeks are logicians and Hebrews are psychologists'. Briefly, 'the Greeks experienced existence by seeing and the Hebrews by hearing and perceiving'.

Comparisons like these must have the appearance of hard-drawn contrasts. But this is not Dr. Boman's intention. His conclusion is this: 'Since both our chief senses, sight and hearing, must pay for their astonishing accomplishments the price of an externally stamped bias, both . . . Hellas and Israel could achieve their magnificent contributions to civilization only in virtue of their bias. . . . We can pay them no greater homage than to attend equally to both heritages, to protect them, and, if possible, to find a synthesis between them. . . . The Greeks describe reality as *being*, the Hebrews as *movement*. Reality is, however, both at the same time; this is logically impossible, and yet it is correct'.

C. R. NORTH

DEMYTHOLOGIZING

Bultmann has won great fame for his attempt to interpret in terms of existentialist philosophy what he regards as the myths of the New Testament. But there is a point at which he calls a halt to this process of demythologizing. He is like a motorist, Dr. John Macquarrie says in *The Scope of*

Demythologizing (S.C.M.; 25s. net), who sees a sudden dip in the road and pulls on the wheel at the last minute. He sets a limit to demythologizing, and that limit is the *kerygma*, 'the proclamation of the decisive act of God in Christ'. Jesus of Nazareth is a concrete figure of history. Grace and revelation are an event, the saving event of Christ.

Because he 'demythologizes but not too much', Bultmann has been severely criticized. He has been attacked by the orthodox for his liberalism and by liberals for his orthodoxy. He has been under fire from neo-orthodox, Roman Catholic, and liberal theologians as well as from existentialist and linguistic philosophers. Dr. Macquarrie defends him against all these attacks. He claims that the orthodox critics have failed to appreciate Bultmann's concern to preserve the *kerygma*, and that the liberal critics are too vague in their account of grace and revelation. The limit which Bultmann has set to demythologizing does not involve him in an inescapable contradiction but leads to a paradox which can be vindicated.

Dr. Macquarrie is not uncritical of Bultmann. He admits that his definition of myth and his understanding of modernity need revision and clarification. But this book is essentially a defence of Bultmann. Dr. Macquarrie writes not as the historian of a passing fashion but as the advocate of a movement which is still in its early stages. 'Demythologizing', he affirms, 'looks like being one of the most promising ways forward for theology in our time.' If Bultmann's limit is accepted, there is opportunity for development.

Dr. Macquarrie's book, which is a companion to his earlier volume, 'An Existentialist Theology', gives the position of Bultmann on the map of modern thought. It is full of information about contemporary thinkers, and gives illuminating accounts of some works which are not easily available. Dr. Macquarrie expresses difficult ideas and arguments with lucidity, and reveals an attractive gift for illustration. He is an excellent guide to an important area of the frontier between theology and philosophy.

ARTHUR W. WAINWRIGHT

WHAT METHODISTS BELIEVE AND PREACH

'What is needed is not a Methodist scholasticism which turns Wesley into an orthodoxy. It is vital that the important Methodist emphases should be related to the contemporary Biblical and theological dialogue, and that Methodists should be prepared to hear every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the living God as he speaks from all the traditions in which he has

made his presence manifest.' Such is the wise conclusion of Professor Colin W. Williams (of Drew and Melbourne) in *John Wesley's Theology To-day* (Epworth Press; 21s. net). This careful and critical study of Methodist doctrine is neither a re-hash of Wesley's sermons and notes nor a sectarian fanfare but a serious attempt to relate the characteristic Methodist emphasis to ecumenical commitments in the light of theological developments since the eighteenth century. Solid study of original texts has joined with masterly grasp of subsequent exposition and criticism to produce a fresh and lively appraisal likely to serve the interests both of world Methodism and of the Ecumenical Movement.

By happy coincidence comes a volume of the sermons of Dr. Maldwyn Edwards, recently designated President-elect of the British Conference. *In the Midst of the Throne* (Epworth Press; 10s. net) contains nineteen sermons for special occasions, canonical and customary, of the Christian Year. Showing how a Methodist scholar and preacher relates the unchanging gospel to contemporary needs, they provide an excellent footnote to, and illustration of, Dr. Williams' argument.

MARCUS WARD

CHRISTIANITY AS A WAY OF LIFE

Professor Paul Hessert's *Introduction to Christianity* (Allen and Unwin; 30s. net) is a larger and more solid volume than the title might suggest. The author teaches in the Wesleyan University, Illinois, and his aim in this book is to present Christianity as a way of life rather than as a system of doctrine. Just for this reason, he tells us, any written statement of Christianity must be inadequate. 'We do not comprehend Christianity intellectually. We comprehend it as whole persons.'

Professor Hessert's approach leads him to adopt a different order of presentation from that which has been traditionally employed. Instead of beginning with God and creation, he takes as his point of departure, after some preliminary considerations, the life of Jesus as we know it. From this he goes on to the significance of Jesus, then to the problems of God and man, God and the world, the Church and the Christian hope.

At the end of each chapter, he puts forward questions for discussion, and makes suggestions for further reading. These suggestions take account of many, though not all, of the major trends in current theology. Professor Hessert's volume would make an excellent text-book for seminars or adult education groups.

JOHN MACQUARRIE

The chapters of *Beggars in Velvet* by the Rev. Carlyle Marney, Th.M., Th.D. (Abingdon Press; \$2.00), are based on Broadcast Talks and are typically American. They are done in the manner of Dr. Vincent Peale's 'Positive Thinking'. The author has a gift for revealing both the foibles and the weaknesses of us all, knows how to give them a title, and by a slick phrase and apt literary allusions can give life to what he says. Ministers might do worse than buy this volume, not only because they are likely to get material for their sermons, but for a lesson on how to get it over. He divides his talks into 'The Life We Live', 'The Way We Do', and 'The Hope We Have'.

The latest book by the Rev. Dr. Andrew W. Blackwood has the intriguing title, *The Growing Minister* (Abingdon Press; \$3.00). It is divided into two parts entitled 'Opportunities to Grow' and 'Obstacles to Growth'. Dr. Blackwood confesses that of all the books he has written for ministers this one has cost him most. We can believe that, for the wisdom expressed here has clearly grown out of the author's experience and that of those who have opened their hearts to him. It is a frank and challenging book which cannot fail to be helpful to many.

The Swarthmore Lecture for 1960 has been published by Messrs. Allen and Unwin at 6s. net (paper, 4s. 6d.) under the title *The Creative Imagination*. The author, Mr. Kenneth C. Barnes, B.Sc., has long been a teacher of science and he has reflected much on the ways of science and religion. A large part of his message is contained in these words, 'If religion is our response to the totality of experience it should be able to include science as part—a very large part—of its activity. If it cannot (and largely it does not) it is because our religion is small-minded, parochial, turned in upon itself, and for all its apparent certainty, frightened.'

The Borderland: An Exploration of Theology in English Literature, by the Rev. Canon Roger Lloyd (Allen and Unwin; 16s. net), is an altogether fascinating and charming book. The Borderland is 'the place where the professional theologian and the (theologically) amateur artist, who interprets his thought to a wider audience than he can ever hope to attract, meet and join hands'. The occupants of the Borderland are of extreme importance in these days, for nowadays 'creeds have to be compressed into poems and doctrines into novels before most moderns will heed them'.

The inhabitants of the Borderland are many and varied—Shakespeare, Milton, G. K. Chesterton, Charles Williams, Dorothy Sayers, and many

another. 'Robinson Crusoe' and 'Tom Brown's Schooldays' alike move in the Borderland.

The substance of this book was delivered as a series of lectures in the University College of North Wales in Bangor, and these lectures were more than worth publishing in permanent form. We have only one complaint. Sixteen shillings is a large price for a book of a hundred and eleven pages. It seems to us a very great pity that Canon Lloyd's publishers have removed this charming and stimulating book from the reach of many who would much like to possess it.

What is the Church to do with people who seem to have lost the dimension of the supernatural? That is the real subject of a book with the misleading title, *Significant Church History*, by the Rev. R. Gordon Milburn (James Clarke; 7s. 6d. net). The author's answer is that the Church should have a dual, instead of a single message and ministry. The Church's ministry to Christians is one thing, and its message to the world is another. Each should have its own methods and institutions. The author makes some practical and radical suggestions about restoring the intellectual presuppositions of religion by means of a spiritual philosophy with a parochial organization to promote it. All this involves an express rejection of the unitary evangelism proposed in such a document as the report 'Toward the Conversion of England'. One may question the validity of the book's thesis without denying that much that it contains is acute criticism which needs to be taken account of by all the churches.

The pacifists and the militarists are both right and they are both wrong. Is it possible to extract the right from both and combine it, while abandoning the wrong? Mr. R. G. Bell believes that before war can be abolished, a practical method of doing what people expect wars to do must be adopted. That method he describes as active, disciplined, non-violent resistance. For a persuasive argument with illustrations of how this method might be applied in different situations see his *Alternative to War* (James Clarke; 2s. 6d. net).

In *Towards Mutual Understanding Between Jews and Christians* (James Clarke; 4s. 6d. net) Rabbi John D. Rayner, M.A., insists justifiably that modern Judaism is not to be equated with first-century Judaism, especially with the unflattering New Testament picture of it; and he traces its development since that time. He gives a personal estimate of the significance of the life and teaching of Jesus, showing the Jewish attitude to Him as Messiah, Saviour and Son of God. This excellent book will give many Christians a new and much

better informed conception of Judaism than they had before.

Morals and Man, by Fr. Gerald Vann, O.P., now published by Collins in the 'Fontana Books' at 2s. 6d., is a revision of a book first published in 1937 under the title 'Morals Makyth Man'. The underlying philosophy is Thomist; but the application is contemporary, and the writing sparkles, witness a sentence chosen at random—'A society in which a man cannot call his house or his work his own is on the way to becoming a society in which a man cannot call his soul his own.'

It is a hazardous business to present *A Short History of Christianity* in some three hundred and forty pages of text, exclusive of references, chronological table, bibliography and index. Dr. Martin E. Marty has attempted it, and the result is published by Darton, Longman and Todd at 18s. net. His success is not unqualified. There are illuminating sentences and paragraphs giving admirable summaries of views or significances. It is, too, a good idea to keep always in view the disparity between historical reality and the Church's claim to be one—holy, catholic and apostolic. On the other hand, there are sentences like—'Sometimes, as in the Scottish Disruption of 1843, disestablishment was abrupt.' Disestablishment was not an issue in 1843; but if one must speak in these terms, what happened in the Disruption was that about one-third of the Church of Scotland disestablished itself by breaking away from the State connexion. Compressions can sometimes be too dearly bought.

How can the Christian of to-day be in the world but not of it? Is choice limited to retreat from the world or to being conformed to it? Fr. Jean Danielou, S.J., will not leave it there. In *The Christian Today* (Desclee Co., New York; \$2.75), tr. by Kathryn Sullivan, he develops under eight great themes—holiness, love, obedience, etc.—a Christian spirituality wherewith the believer may live a full life in and for the world without the taint of or surrender to its errors. A further and deeper aspect of the problem is treated by Msgr. Lucien Cerfaux in *Apostle and Apostolate* (Desclee, Tournai, Belgium; Fr. 110), tr. by Donald D. Duggan. Jesus' instructions to the Apostles for the Galilean mission, as recorded in St. Matthew, are here expounded as the abiding pattern of the Church's mission to the ends of earth and the end of time. This 'code' for the modern apostle, be he ordained or lay, is developed with a richness of illustration from the communion of saints and persuasively applied to present circumstances.

Trumpets in the Morning, by Rita F. Snowden, contains twenty-four stories for boys and girls and is published by the Epworth Press at the very reasonable price of 4s. 6d. net (paper covers). Few people can tell stories better than Miss Snowden, and few, indeed, can teach more naturally by means of stories. To show readers how good are Miss Snowden's stories in this book we quote in *Virginibus Puerisque* this month part of 'The Little Ships'.

We commend *We Beheld His Glory*, Books I. and II., by Mr. Trevor Rice and Mr. Colin Turner (Epworth Press; 4s. 6d. net each). The contents are short plays for children of eleven to thirteen to act in the class-room. They are designed to supplement normal lessons on the life of our Lord.

Heinrich Scharp, who has spent many years in Rome as a newspaper correspondent, has written a book entitled *How the Catholic Church is Governed*. It is published by Herder, Freiburg, and Nelson, Edinburgh, at 12s. 6d. net. The author has confined himself to the central government of the Church—the Pope, the cardinals, the congregations, the tribunals, and the offices. With chapters, too, on the Pope's daily life and the procedure in papal elections, the author goes far to render intelligible to the outsider the oldest form of government now existing in the world.

The Rev. Clayton E. Williams of the American Church in Paris has gathered together a number of his Passion Week and Easter sermons, including meditations on the Seven Words from the Cross. They are published as *The Dark Road to Triumph* (Hodder and Stoughton; 10s. 6d. net).

These are good sermons, centred on an inexhaustible theme, suggestive to the preacher and arresting to the general reader.

The Life and Work of Edmund Bishop, by Mr. Nigel Abercrombie (Longmans; 70s. net), is a lengthy book of five hundred and thirty-nine pages and is the authoritative biography of an influential English liturgist and historian. In 1867, at the age of twenty-one, Edmund Bishop left the Church of England for the Church of Rome. This outstanding scholar had many contacts with Downside Abbey. He gave up his work in the Education Office, where he had held a post for over twenty years, in order to become a monk, but this was not successful. The value of the biography, with its overwhelming mass of detail, will be appreciated mainly by those who

are concerned with the history of the Roman Rite.

We commend a book which will tell the ordinary reader all he is likely to wish to know about how he got his Bible—*Our Ageless Bible*, by the Rev. Thomas Linton Leishman (Nelson; 18s. net). The sub-title, 'From Early Manuscripts to Modern Versions', indicates its scope. The author, a member of a formerly well-known Scottish clerical family, has written a book popular in style, but firmly based on careful scholarship, and furnished with a bibliography useful for students. There have been many such books in the past; but this one, giving considerable space to modern translations and the Dead Sea Scrolls, is thoroughly up-to-date.

Movements into Tomorrow, by the Rev. David L. Edwards (S.C.M.; 2s. 6d. net), is a sketch of the British Student Christian Movement and of its international connexions by a former Associate Secretary of the Movement who is now Editor of the Press. There are books which tell the story more fully, but no one of them covers the whole period of over sixty years, during which the Movement has been a force in the Universities and Colleges, as this booklet does. It provides a clear and fascinating survey.

Call to Worship, by the Rev. Neville Clark (S.C.M.; 7s. 6d. net), is No. 15 in the series 'Studies in Ministry and Worship'. The Baptist author writes an essay on the principles of liturgical creation, and sets forth a pattern of public worship controlled by the fundamental and correct principle—'the indissolubility of Word and Sacrament: together these constitute the unalterable core of Liturgy' (p. 39). This essay is far from mere theorizing and is the exposition of an actual, creative struggle in liturgical revival. Since the writer speaks existentially he commands attention.

Myth and Reality in the Old Testament, by Dr. Brevard S. Childs (S.C.M.; 9s. 6d. net), is commended. That various passages in the Old Testament, notably the early chapters of Genesis, are to be treated as myths, *i.e.*, as expressions of an understanding of reality, is now fairly generally conceded. What Dr. Childs emphasizes is the tension or conflict manifest in these Old Testament myths between their revised form as presented and their traditional form, as otherwise known, in terms of an understanding of reality which is centred in the New Israel. This is an illuminating book which should not be overlooked.

Religious Certainty—II.

By VINCENT TAYLOR, D.D., F.B.A.

In my first article on this subject I pointed out the impossibility of avoiding negatives when discussing Religious Certainty, particularly as regards the Bible and the Church. In theology, however, negatives settle nothing and may be misleading. We have always to consider the positive alternatives to the views we reject. In defending Moral, as distinct from Absolute Certainty, I spoke of the debt which the former owes to reason, Scripture, and the corporate witness of the Church, but inasmuch as the infallibility of the Bible and the Church were rejected in that article, I feel it necessary to discuss further the real authority which, in fact, these two possess. This is a question about which the theologian of to-day must make up his mind and express his conclusions unambiguously.

I

In contemporary theology the authority of the Bible is closely related to the concept of Revelation. This concept has been restated by several theologians, in particular, by Archbishop Temple in *Nature, Man and God* (1934), by Professor John Baillie in *The Knowledge of God* (1939) and *The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought* (1956), and by Professor Leonard Hodgson in *The Doctrine of the Trinity* (1943), in his Gifford Lectures for 1955–57, *For Faith and Freedom*, and in an article on 'God and the Bible' now reprinted in *On the Authority of the Bible* (1960). The tendency of these discussions is to maintain that Revelation is to be found in 'the mighty works' of God, in the Exodus, the Return from Captivity, and, supremely, in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ.

Dr. Temple insists that Revelation must be in a Person. He writes, 'Now if the whole contention of these Lectures is sound, knowledge of God can be fully given to man only in a person, never in a doctrine, still less in a formless faith, whatever that might be'.¹ 'What is offered to man's apprehension in any specific Revelation is not truth concerning God but the living God Himself.'² The Bible is not itself the revelation but the record of the revelation.³

In the first of the two books mentioned above Dr. Baillie declares that the knowledge of God's reality comes to us, not as the result of an inference

of any kind, whether implicit or explicit, 'whether laboriously excogitated or swiftly intuited'; 'it comes rather', he says, 'through our direct personal encounter with Him in the Person of Jesus Christ His Son our Lord'.⁴ In *The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought* this claim is set against the background of a historical summary of theological thought from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. Revelation, it is affirmed, is the self-disclosure of God. 'All revelation', he writes, 'is given, not in the form of directly communicated knowledge, but through events occurring in the historical experience of mankind, events which are apprehended by faith as "the mighty acts" of God, and which therefore engender in the mind of man such reflective knowledge of God as it is given him to possess'.⁵ Not all events are revelatory, 'but only through such as appear as God's mighty works: and through no event in its bare character as occurrence, but only as men are enabled by the Spirit of God to apprehend and receive its revelatory power'.⁶

The question arises: How is the authority of Scripture related to this conception of Revelation? This issue presents itself because the new emphasis is a break with Christian tradition, in which Revelation was identified with the contents of the Bible. In reply, Dr. Baillie writes, 'The Bible is the written witness to that intercourse of mind and event which is of the essence of revelation'.⁷ The witness itself is a human activity and as such is fallible. Nevertheless, he maintains—and the qualification is important—we cannot believe that, having performed His mighty acts, and having illuminated the minds of prophet and apostle to understand their true import, God left the testimony to take care of itself. 'The same Holy Spirit who had enlightened them unto their own salvation must also have aided their efforts, whether spoken or written, to convey the message of salvation to those whom their words would reach.'⁸ 'This', he adds, 'is what is meant by the inspiration of Holy Scripture.' This opinion differs from what Dr. Hodgson appears to say, and to his view we now turn.

Like the two writers already mentioned Dr. Hodgson also sees Revelation in activities of God in history accepted by faith and illuminated by the insight given by the Holy Spirit; but he more

¹ *Op. cit.*, 321.

² *Op. cit.*, 322.

³ *Op. cit.*, 307.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, 143.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, 62.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, 78.

⁷ *Op. cit.*, 110.

⁸ *Op. cit.*, 111.

trenchantly rejects the traditional view that it is to be found in the statements of Scripture. In this opinion he is strongly influenced by the scientific discoveries and the historical researches of the last century. He asks what we have gained at the cost of the agonising transition from the pre-critical to the post-critical approach, and he answers this question by saying that we have gained 'a clearer apprehension than was given to any previous age that the revelation of God is not given in words, but in deeds'. The significance of the Scriptures, he says, lies in the fact that 'they bear witness to the activity in history of God, our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier'.¹ Summarily stated, his view is that divine revelation is to be found in deeds and not in statements contained in the Bible.

In *For Faith and Freedom* Dr. Hodgson expounds his point of view more fully. 'To begin with', he writes, 'I suggest that we should give up thinking and speaking about the Bible as though in itself or of itself it were the ultimate source of authority for any doctrinal statement in matters of faith and morals.' He hopes that no pupil of his will ever be guilty of using the expression 'the Bible says', since ninety-nine times out of a hundred the expression means that the speaker has found some passage which he quotes as authority for the position he is maintaining, regardless of the fact that those who disagree with him may find others which support their views. The practice is misleading because it implies 'the ascription to the Bible of an ultimate authority which cannot rightly be credited to anything within this created universe'.² Here the saving adjective is the word 'ultimate', and many readers will feel that this is not their claim when they use the words 'The Bible says'. Dr. Hodgson does not mean that we must neglect the statements of Scripture. In fact he supports his own doctrinal views by appealing to Scripture. In *The Doctrine of the Trinity* he has two chapters on 'the Revelation in the New Testament', and it is 'the central thesis' of his Lectures that the doctrine 'represents the conception of God involved in the Christian life of adopted sonship in Christ'.³ He bases this view on the teaching contained in the Fourth Gospel, and even accepts Jn 16⁷ as possessing 'all the authority of an *ipsissimum verbum* of our Lord Himself'.⁴ Moreover, he sustains his argument for the personality of the Holy Spirit by means of the New Testament passages which speak of the Spirit as 'He'. A debating point must not be made of this, since his basic principle is that Scripture witnesses to divine revelation and is not the revelation in itself. The vital question we are to ask is, 'What must the truth have been and be if

men who thought and spoke as they did put it like that?'⁵

In the Lectures delivered at King's College the same position is advanced in an even more challenging form. As he reads the writings of a large number of theologians, Dr. Hodgson receives the impression that they 'have not yet woken up to what has happened to the idea of revelation during the past hundred years' and are conducting their discussions 'in dreamland'.⁶ In former times men were seriously disturbed by the thought that any statement of fact in the Bible might be disproved by historical or scientific inquiry. What was felt to be at stake was the assurance of a divinely guaranteed revelation immune to the changes and chances of human discovery and criticism. From that day to this theology has been schizophrenic, one side of its mind pursuing paths of scholarship, the other seeking to recover the sense of assurance formerly given by reliance on the divinely given revelation. Form-criticism, 'the Streeter type of gospel criticism', and typological or liturgical studies are important as a matter of scholarship, but it is the same kind of knowledge required by examiners for honours in secular subjects. What is needed is the perception that revelation is given primarily not in words but in events which become revelatory to us as the Holy Spirit opens our eyes to see their significance as acts of God.

I have outlined these views with some fullness in order to show the nature of the problem regarding Revelation and the Bible as it confronts us in theology to-day.

The agreement of the three scholars on the nature of Revelation is impressive. I think they may be said to have made out their case that Revelation is to be found mainly in the mighty acts of God, especially in the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and that to this self-disclosure of God, the Bible, interpreted by the Holy Spirit, bears witness. But can we go further and claim that Revelation is also contained in the statements of Scripture? On this crucial point Dr. Hodgson's view is emphatically in the negative, and a very minor position is assigned to the importance of critical studies.⁷ On the question of the Bible Dr. Baillie appears to me to express a sounder opinion when he recognizes the existence of a Biblical inspiration which consists in the fact that the Holy Spirit, who enlightened the original writers, 'must also have aided their efforts, whether spoken or

⁵ *For Faith and Freedom*, ii. 15f.

⁶ *In On the Authority of the Bible*, 1.

⁷ In speaking of commentators Dr. Hodgson goes so far as to ask, 'What do they think they are doing beyond increasing the material for exploitation by examiners and their victims?' (*In On the Authority of the Bible*, 3.)

¹ *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, 19.

² *Op. cit.*, II. 12. ³ *Op. cit.*, 55f. ⁴ *Op. cit.*, 44.

written, to convey the message of salvation to those whom their words would reach'.

We cannot side-track the importance of critical studies—textual, literary, and historical. If the primary evidence for things done by God in the history of the world is the Bible, we are bound to inquire who wrote the several books, what sources they used, and what the historical value of the record may be. The 'Streeter type of gospel criticism', Form-criticism, and other allied disciplines are not merely useful for the purpose of examinations; they are indispensable studies if we are to have confidence that we know what the Bible actually says, and they cannot be neglected whatever opinions we may hold concerning Biblical theology. But unquestionably more is needed. It is a fitting question to ask, what the truth must have been if the Biblical writers thought and spoke as they did; but even this inquiry is not enough, since in itself our answer is a matter of private judgment. And if for our answer we go further, and claim the aid of the Holy Spirit, we cannot rule out the greater probability that the self-same Spirit guided prophets and apostles, and so we are back again to the view that Revelation may well be embodied in statements as well as in divine acts. On *a priori* grounds there is no compelling reason why Revelation should be found in 'mighty acts' of God, but not in words. Indeed, words can be a better medium of communication than events which need to be explained. Moreover, the explanation of events as 'mighty acts' of God is itself a historical judgment, no doubt valid, but nevertheless exposed to all the uncertainties of such judgments. The truth is we cannot avoid some theory of Biblical inspiration if we are to find a worthy doctrine of Revelation, and we ought not to be deterred from this search by the fear of returning to the pre-critical form of this doctrine, as involving an inerrant authority to be accepted without further question.

We are indebted to Professor C. F. Evans¹ for reminding us of a significant opinion of P. T. Forsyth in the words, 'I do not believe in verbal inspiration. I am with the critics in principle. But the true minister ought to find the words and phrases of the Bible so full of spiritual food and felicity that he has some difficulty in not believing in verbal inspiration.' 'Verbal inspiration' is a phrase so loaded with difficulties that I think we ought to prefer the more modest phrase 'Biblical inspiration' employed by Dr. Baillie. And I believe that hard facts, and not mere *a priori* assumptions, including the part that Scripture has filled in the history of doctrine, compel us to recognize a vital form of inspiration. It consists of the belief that *the writers of Scripture, especially the*

New Testament writers, were so illuminated by the Holy Spirit that their words have the quality of divine revelation. This does not mean that everything they wrote has this quality, so that we can settle questions in dispute by merely quoting their statements as proof texts, but that we are entitled to interpret and weigh their words as media through which God is speaking to us. Isaiah 53 may be cited as an example, and in particular, the words, 'Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows', with the words that follow. This judgment extends to the sayings of Jesus, the interpretative words of the Fourth Gospel (*e.g.* 1¹⁴ and 3¹⁶), the great Pauline passages (*e.g.* Ro 5⁸, 2 Co 5¹⁹, and Ph 2^{6t.}), and many other New Testament statements. They are the words of men, but of men illuminated by the Spirit of God. No doubt we shall continue to differ about the statements we select and the amount of authority we find in them just as we differ in interpreting the mighty works of God in history. But we shall suffer both in religion and theology if we banish these words from the category of revelation. In relation to the question of Religious Certainty this estimate of Biblical inspiration implies that the Bible, although not in itself a final authority inerrant and indisputable, is a strong buttress of certitude which we are entitled to recognize as such.

II

Precisely the same view applies to the authority of the Christian Church. This claim does not need to be argued with the same fullness, since many of the relevant issues, which arise in discussing the relevatory nature of the Bible, apply also to the Church. We have by no means settled the issue if we dismiss the idea of the Church as the final authority of religious belief. We still have to determine what kind of authority its corporate witness has, and whether we can afford to neglect this authority in favour of sole reliance upon the testimony of the Bible or of the Holy Spirit to the believing mind. The Church is the Body of Christ, of which He is also the Head, and through her historic witness the Holy Spirit speaks. The breaches in her unity, which we all deplore, and the disputes which blacken her history, do not destroy the significance of this witness which is written deeply in the existence of the Bible, in the great Creeds, the teaching of the Fathers, and the life and experience of the saints, canonised and uncanonised alike.

When we have done full justice to the fact that the Creeds state the essentials of Christian belief in the thought and language of an earlier day, it still remains an impressive truth that these Creeds

¹ In *On the Authority of the Bible*, 26.

are, with few exceptions, accepted in every part of the Christian Church, and are recognised as of essential importance in all discussions of questions of Church unity. Conciliar authorities did not invent the Creeds as something new and hitherto unknown; they stated and endorsed what Christian teachers and ordinary believers had long held and maintained. As regards some of the clauses in the Creeds liberty of interpretation must be conceded. Not a few claim that this is necessary as regards the words, 'Conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary', and many would agree that, although the phrase, 'of one substance with the Father', is couched in the language of an outworn philosophy, it continues to safeguard belief in the essential divinity of Christ. The words, 'ascended into heaven, from whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead', reflect a three-storied view of the universe, but maintain the belief that in the end all things will be summed up in Christ, and that in a manner we cannot describe He will manifest Himself to His own. No doubt we should prefer phrases more in harmony with modern thought, but it is not easy to supply these and impossible, in the twentieth century, to find words which would secure universal acceptance in the Church.

In addition to the Creeds we inherit statements of belief handed down by Fathers, doctors, and teachers, expressed, as observed in the first article, in the great hymns of the Church, in liturgical worship, and in the fellowship of the Christian Eucharist. In the Christian ministry, apart from disputed questions concerning Apostolic Succession, we possess a living bond by which individual communions are taught and nourished, less and less concerned to claim the universal validity of their particular Church Order, and minded to discover, if that be possible, forms of authorization which will unite, and no longer divide, Christians throughout the world. Martyrs, prophets, and teachers belong to all of us, and worshippers, whether in Bethels or Cathedrals, progressively discover, while differing in forms of expression, how much they hold in common. Christianity becomes increasingly ecumenical as the gospel wins its way in far-off lands among men of every tribe, and race, and people who, like the Wise Men of old, bring their treasures to the universal figure of Christ. Doubtless, behind all statements of this kind, there are legacies of hatred, misunderstanding, persecution, and folly which it is hard to out-

live, but there can be no doubt at all that among Churchmen, as among politicians, 'a wind of change' blows which comes from the Spirit of God.

It would be fatal to ignore these facts in thinking of Religious Certainty. Here, in the Church as in the Bible, is a mighty buttress of faith. Christians do not stand alone in the world. As members within the Body of Christ, we are linked with a great multitude of believers in the Church Militant and Triumphant which no man can number. Our roots lie deep. We need to remember the words of the great Apostle, 'It is not thou that bearest the root, but the root thee' (Ro 11¹⁸), and his even greater words, 'The gifts and the calling of God are without repentance' (Ro 11²⁹). As St. Paul looked back upon the history of his people and thought of their future he was moved to cry, 'O the depth of the riches and the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past tracing out!' (Ro 11³³). With how much more reason have we the right to join in his exultation, 'For of him, and through him, and unto him, are all things. To him be the glory for ever. Amen'!

One can understand and sympathize with the attitude of those who rest in the comfort of the Infallibility of the Church and of the Bible. But it is the contention of this article that in His wisdom God has given us, not less, but something even greater: a testimony of the Spirit to the believing heart, sustained by the Word of God and the life of the Church, which leaves open to us ventures of faith and trust, which does not seal and deliver the *depositum fidei* so that in this life we have no questions to ask, but exposes us to the storms of existence with its seasons of perplexity and doubt, but also times of insight and assurance. Of all descriptions of Religious Certainty this kind, which is neither a 'Grand Perhaps' nor the declaration of a purely external authority, agrees best with the foundation principles of a worthy theology, the Love of God and the dignity of men made in the divine image. Like the disciples on the lake, we are at times disposed to cry, 'Master, carest thou not that we perish?', but even while the waves beat into the boat, the Lord rises and rebukes the wind and the waves with His majestic word, 'Peace, be still'.¹

¹ The Rev. James Hamilton, B.D., points out to me that in the quotation from Augustine in column one of my first article it is the *orbis terrarum* that judges, not that is judged.

Contributions and Comments

When Did Jesus Die?

DID Jesus die on the day of Preparation for the Passover, or on the day of the Passover itself? The object of this note is not to weigh the many arguments adduced in favour of either date, but to suggest a consideration which seems to be overlooked in recent discussions of the problem.¹

Paul speaks of Jesus as the 'first-fruits of them that have fallen asleep' (1 Co 15²⁰; cf. v. 23). He uses the word *aparche* because Jesus rose from the dead on the same day as the sheaf of first-fruits was offered in the Temple. As the waving of the first-fruits released the rest of the harvest for reaping and consumption and thus inaugurated the harvest itself, so the resurrection of Jesus inaugurated the New Age in which all shall be made alive, with 'Christ as the first-fruits and then them that are Christ's at his coming'.

According to Lv 23^{10f.} the first-fruits were offered in the Temple on 'the morrow after the sabbath':

Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring the sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest; and he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it.

At first sight it would seem that the phrase 'the morrow after the sabbath' refers to the Sunday in Passover week. As Jesus rose from the dead on this particular Sunday, it has been generally assumed that Paul applied the word 'firstfruits' to Jesus because His resurrection took place on this Sunday.

This assumption however requires reconsideration. There were two different interpretations of the phrase 'the morrow after the sabbath' in the New Testament period. Originally it must have referred to the Sunday which fell during the Festival of Unleavened Bread.² This is how the

Sadducees understood the phrase,³ and this interpretation was given to it by the Samaritans and by the Karaite sect of the Jews.⁴ But this was not the generally accepted interpretation in the New Testament period. According to the Pharisees, the 'sabbath' here refers not to the seventh day of the week, but to the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, which was a 'high day'. Thus for the Pharisees the offering of the first-fruits was made *not on a fixed day of the week, but on a fixed day of the month*. The sheaf was waved on the day after Nisan 15 (the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread), *i.e.*, on Nisan 16. It was pure coincidence that in the year of Jesus' death Nisan 16 happened to fall on a Sunday.

There is strong evidence that, in the New Testament period, the Pharisaic rather than the Sadducean interpretation prevailed in the official calendar.⁵ Philo,⁶ Josephus,⁷ and the Mishnah⁸ all agree that the first-fruits were offered on the second day of the festival, *i.e.*, on Nisan 16. Their combined testimony is unlikely to be wrong. In any case Paul, with his Pharisaic upbringing, would have taken for granted the Pharisaic interpretation of Lv 23^{10f.} It may therefore be assumed that Paul called Jesus 'the first-fruits of them that have fallen asleep' not because Jesus was raised from the dead on Sunday during the Festival of Unleavened Bread but because His resurrection took place on Nisan 16.

From this date the day on which Jesus died can easily be calculated. His body lay in the tomb

³ Cf. Mishnah, *Menahoth*, x. 3¹: 'Because of the Boethuseans who used to say: The *Omer* may not be reaped at the close of a Festival-day'. For the interpretation of this statement, cf. H. Danby, *Mishnah* [1933], 506, n. 1.

⁴ Cf. A. Jaubert, *La Date de la Cène* [1957], 22.

⁵ For the theory of two rival calendars, an ancient and an official one, cf. A. Jaubert, *op. cit.*

⁶ *De Sept.*, ii. 20: 'There is also a festival which falls immediately after the first day (of the festival) and this is called, on account of what happens on it, the Sheaf'.

⁷ *Ant.*, III. x. 5: 'And on the second day of the Unleavened Bread, being the sixteenth, they take of the produce which they have reaped but which they have not previously touched.'

⁸ *Menahoth*, x. 3f.: 'How is it made ready? The messengers of the court used to go out on the eve of the Festival-day. . . . When it grew dark he called out, Is the sun set? . . . They reaped it and put it in baskets and brought it to the Temple Court.'

¹ E.g. J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (Eng. tr. [1955]).

² Cf. G. Buchanan Gray, *Sacrifice in the Old Testament* [1925], 333f. Dr. Gray devotes a chapter to the origin, development and significance of 'The Sheaf' (pp. 323-36), to which the writer is much indebted.

for two nights. His death took place on the afternoon of Friday Nisan 14, that is, on the day of Preparation for the Passover. This confirms the testimony of the Fourth Gospel.¹ It means that Paul's application of *pascha* to Jesus' death² is just as accurate as his use of *aparche* in connexion with His resurrection³; for Jesus would have died as the Passover lambs were being slaughtered in the Temple Courts.

No doubt this consideration alone is not sufficient to establish the date of Jesus' death. But it is a weighty factor of which full account must be taken.

HUGH MONTEFIORE

Cambridge

¹ Jn 19^{14, 31, 42}.

² Cf. 1 Co 5⁷.

³ Cf. G. Buchanan Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 388.

Sowing and Ploughing

IN *The Parables of Jesus*, 9 (S.C.M. 1954) J. Jeremias cites Dalman and passages from the Talmud as evidence of ancient Palestinian agricultural procedure whereby the seed is first scattered and then ploughed in. There is a reference to this method in the Book of Jubilees, 11¹¹ which seems to have escaped the notice of commentators. 'And the prince Mastema sent ravens and birds to devour the seed which was sown in the land, in order to destroy the land, and rob the children of men of their labours. Before they could plough in the seed, the ravens picked (it) from the surface of the ground' (*Book of Jubilees* [S.P.C.K. 1917], 85).

W. G. ESSAME

St. Leonards-on-Sea

In the Study

Virginibus Puerisque

The Farthing

BY THE REVEREND G. W. STERRY, LONDON

'I am small and despised: yet . . .' Ps 119¹⁴¹.

HAVE you heard? The farthing, our smallest coin, is to disappear. At the end of this year the Queen will make a proclamation to say that the farthing can no longer be used. It has outlived its usefulness. Sad, isn't it?

But is it? It is true that there are still some of us who can remember when, on a Saturday, we were given not sixpenny pieces, nor even three-penny pieces, no, not even a penny, but a farthing to spend. But the truth is that the farthing has come down in the world.

It started off about seven hundred years ago in the time of Edward I, and then it was a silver coin. After about three hundred years it had become copper. Then, after a very short time, it became tin with a kind of copper plug in the middle, and now it had an inscription too: 'Nummorum Famulus', that is, 'A servant of coins'—a little domestic servant. After about another two hundred years it was decided that it was time that the tin and the copper were melted together to make bronze. Then came the most shameful thing of all. The face of the farthing was blackened. Why? Because when it was bright and new it looked so like a ten shilling gold piece, which we then used instead of ten shilling notes, that it was possible to cheat people. As soon as the new farthings were made they were baked and that blackened them. You see, it is a sad story of

slipping down, down, down. 'I am small and despised: yet . . .'

Yet there is a lovely thing about farthings which ought to be remembered. Some years ago in London there lived a young medical student who was preparing to become a missionary doctor. One night a poor boy who had no home and no parents had taken him to where there were many other boys like himself. They were sleeping on a warehouse roof, covered over with tarpaulins as they slept through the bitterly cold night. The student was shocked. The very next night he was asked to go to a great missionary meeting. To his horror the speaker did not turn up and the Chairman told him that he would have to make the speech. The young man begged to be excused but there was no escape. Slowly he got to his feet; the audience became still; he began to speak, not knowing quite what to say. Then he thought of the unhappy children he had seen the night before and told of them. What he said made a tremendous impression upon his hearers, but nothing was done at the end of the meeting to help. Then the student could see coming towards him a woman who looked like what used to be called a 'domestic servant'. Timidly she came to him with a little packet in her hand and said, 'I had saved this for the missionary fund, but when I heard you I felt I must give it to you for your poor children'. On reaching home he found that the little packet contained twenty-seven farthings. As he thought about it he realised that he had been asking God for guidance and help, and this surely was His way of giving both. The medical student was Dr. Barnardo. Years later he wrote, 'It was the first contribution I ever had from the public,

and I have never doubted since then that this was God's way of showing me that He could, through humble and unexpected instruments, supply all that would be needed for any work which He gave me to do for Him'.

So God used our poor little farthing, with its sad story of coming down in the world, and its little blackened face, to do a great and splendid thing for Him. He can do as much for people too. 'I am small and despised: yet . . . !'

The Little Ships¹

The sun was on the blue sea and the gulls wheeled overhead as we left the little Dutch island of Marken.

Over the blue-painted jetty and rails the fishing nets hang. The air is sweet and salty, and at any time you may see an old fisherman in his black wooden clogs and his baggy blue breeches, enjoying the sight.

At the end of the village, in an open space, where lots of narrow ways meet, is the church. For a long time now, the old fisherman in the black wooden clogs and the big blue breeches has been taking care of it. His name is Jan Peereboom, and when he is not in the church, he is busy tidying up his own little house.

Once inside the church, there was lots to see. The thing that old Jan was most proud of was the thing that met our eyes first, the neat models of ships hanging up in the roof of the church. Big ones and little ones, they hung just above the heads of the worshippers, where they could be seen all the time. And each one, correct in every detail, had been made with the utmost love and skill.

The first one, a lugger, was about twenty-four inches in length, gay with pennant and sail and complete with fishing-net. The next was a sailing-ship, for catching eels. The third was a herring-boat—a *buis*—one of the oldest boats of all. As we admired it, old Jan went into the vestry and brought out a picture of a fleet of *buis* sailing out from Marken. 'Now there is only one left', said he. 'And is this the kind of boat you fished from?' we asked him. 'Yes', he said. 'For thirty-five fishing seasons I went out into the great seas in a boat like that.' And his eyes shone as he remembered it—all the hazards of sunshine and storm.

'But why have the fishermen hung the little boats in the church?' we asked.

'Ah', said old Jan. 'That is because we have

¹ Rita F. Snowden, *Trumpets in the Morning* (Eppworth Press), 15s. This new book is reviewed this month in 'Literature'.

come back safely; and we like to remember that every task we do we offer to God's glory. For us it is fishing the great seas—and we like to remember that He accepts our offering when we bring it with humility and love.'

We have no little model ships hanging in the roofs of our churches, because we are not fishermen; we have other work to do. But we have a verse in the New Testament which should be a good reminder to us that every task we do is important. It says: 'Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God!' (1 Corinthians 10³¹).

The Christian Year

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Providence

BY THE REVEREND CANON J. E. FISON, M.A., D.D.,
CAMBRIDGE

'Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.'—Mk 10¹⁸.

The word, providence, occurs only once in the Authorized Version of the Bible—and then it refers to Felix the Governor, not God the Father: but the fact of providence dominates the whole outlook of the Bible. I agree with the present Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge University when he writes that 'Nothing is more important for the cause of religion at the present day than that we should recover the sense and consciousness of the Providence of God—a Providence that acts not merely by a species of remote control, but as a living thing, operating in all the details of life—working at every moment, visible in every event. Without this you cannot have any serious religion, any real walking with God, any genuine prayer, any authentic fervour and faith.'

I am struck by the contrast here between the typical Roman Catholic outlook in, for example, France, and the typical Anglican or Protestant outlook in England. In France *le bon Dieu* comes so naturally to the lips. In England religion has become more self-conscious. Providence seems, first, to have hardened into predestination and then, secondly, to have disappeared both as a word and also, alas, as a reality into the limbo of lost causes and forgotten faiths. Maybe we have been so keen to make God personal that we have forgotten that He is more than a person, and that sometimes this vital fact is better safeguarded by the judicious use of impersonal terms than by the reiterated proclamation of His personal character.

But, whatever the reason, we all need a keener awareness of the wonder of the ways of Providence

and a simpler trust in the Father, as a corrective to the outlook which sees in 'the changes and chances of this mortal life' only chance or fate. If we are thus to become more keenly aware of the wonder of Providence, no time seems more appropriate than the late autumn, when we move in Nature's annual cycle from old age to death, and when we move in the calendar from the old year of the Church to the season of Advent and the beginning of a new Christian year. At this time especially we can see three ways of the working of Providence.

1. *The Providence of Dovetailing.* On the whole, life seems intended by God to work on the principle of dovetailing. A good carpenter does not make a join by fitting two boards alongside each other: he dovetails them into each other. So often we want to get one job finished before we start another. But God's Providence may have intended them to be joined by some dovetailing process. The earliest of our Gospels seems to have got hold of this point. It is not just literary artifice; it is historical fact that Jesus was so often interrupted in His work. Of course it is true that Mark, unlike Matthew and Luke, dovetails his sources. But it is also true that it was when Jesus was on His way to raise Jairus' daughter that He was interrupted by the incident when the woman suffering from haemorrhage came and touched the hem of His garment. We might have missed the providence of her intervention. Not so Jesus: He first dealt with her, and then went on to raise Jairus' daughter.

It is true that sometimes life has to be planned, so that one part of it is finished before the next is begun. It is on that principle that Dr. Albert Schweitzer seems initially to have organised his life and so gained his three doctorates of medicine, music and theology. But God's ways are not our ways and the principle of dovetailing may so often be the way His Providence works. Pig-headed obstinacy in obedience to preconceived principles or patterns of living may as easily substitute the clear-cut way of sight (and obedience to the Law) for the dovetailed way of faith (and obedience to the will of God).

2. *The Providence of the Spiral.* Whereas the Jews imagined life as a line leading to a goal at the end, the Greeks imagined life as a circle going round and round in a never-ending cycle. There was more truth in the Jewish view than in the Greek, but the Christian outlook brings together the line and the circle and combines them both in the spiral, in which the way goes round and round, but moves on at the same time. Whenever I climb up a spiral staircase in a lighthouse or a library or a church tower, I think that this is a better parable of 'the steep ascent' than a ladder

—or even an escalator! The ways of Providence are often not so direct. If human nature is meant to move in a purposeful direction—and in the end Jesus 'stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem' (Lk 9⁵¹)—it is also meant to conform to the cyclical pattern of the rest of Nature, and nothing is more sad than to see a devoted Christian worker pig-headedly refusing in old age to recognize this fact.

An illustration occurs to me: after all the onward mental progress of youth, adolescence, and manhood, is it not time in middle age for many of us to go back and look again at what we first read years ago and see new truths in it? Our minds may not be young enough to explore new fields of learning or grasp new truths. They can still see the old truths in a new light and the effect is almost more wonderful. We are electrified by the new perspective in which the most hackneyed text or dogma is seen and the result may well be the nearest thing we know of in our experience to being born again. How often the end of life brings us back providentially to the place where it began!

3. *The Providence of the Overlap.* This is perhaps only another way of describing the providence of dovetailing, but it has its own special point at this time when the old calendar year overlaps the new Christian year, and Advent Sunday comes a month before New Year's Day. If all life is meant to demonstrate the wonder of the providence of dovetailing, then surely the Christian life is meant particularly to demonstrate the wonder of the providence of the overlap. We are not taken out of this old temporal life because we begin here and now a new eternal life. We are not taken out of the life of Nature, because we begin here and now the life of grace. Von Hügel used to tell us not to be so enamoured of grace (that moves, perhaps we think, only in a straight line) that we despise Nature (which certainly moves so often in a circle). And we may remind ourselves that the corollary to Von Hügel's warning is also true. We should not be so enamoured of Nature that we ignore grace. There is a place for Sunday and for six other days as well: a place for the Bible and for many other books: a place for the sacramental bread and wine and for much other bread and wine. The river with its winding curves is more often the pattern of the working of God's providence (as John Oman used to remind us) than the canal, or even the bulldozed motor-way or autobahn.

Some theologians love to describe the present Christian era as an overlap—'between the times'. Certainly every Christian life is meant to be an overlap—'between the times'. And the analogy of a relay race suggests that the way we hand over the baton in the overlap may be even more

important than the speed with which we run the lap itself. Certainly this is true in the Christian ministry. How often this is spoiled, either because no trouble is taken with the arrangements for the hand-over or because such trouble is taken about those arrangements that the new minister is merely a faint shadow of the old and instead of a new start at full pace on the new lap, there is only a slow running down of the pace of the old lap. Alas, what sinister associations the word, incumbent, has!

Belief in Providence may be one way whereby belief in the Holy Spirit can again become a governing factor in the lives of Christian people. Admittedly a sub-conscious belief in a relatively impersonal Providence is only a halfway house to a full conscious Christian belief in a personal Father. Nevertheless in many religious circles in England to-day there is a greater peril than a half-developed faith, and that is the danger of an over-conscious belief in Jesus, in which assurance of a personal Saviour becomes a substitute for, instead of a gateway to, faith in the Providence of the Father. The succouring of the unconscious and sub-conscious levels of our personal lives is at least as important as any rescue operations designed for our conscious salvation. It is out of such succour below the level of consciousness that true faith in the Providence of God will be re-born. But perhaps if our conscious minds are alert to the dovetailing, spiralling and overlapping nature of the providences of God, that are taking place under our very noses if only we have eyes to see them, we may have more chance of receiving the deeper succour that we need.

It is not without significance that one of the most popular books of devotion in this country at the present time is a new edition of the work of a Jesuit, who lived in France three hundred years ago—Père de Caussade's *Abandonment to the Divine Providence*. Perhaps we should have more of the gay French *abandon*, which we so badly need, if we had more of the true Christian faith in *le bon Dieu* and the Providence of God.

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT—BIBLE SUNDAY

The Library, the Book and the Word

BY THE REVEREND OWEN E. EVANS, M.A., B.D.,
MANCHESTER

'These are they which bear witness of me.'—Jn 5³⁹ (R.V.).

It is often said, and quite truly, that the Bible is a *Library* rather than a single book. Yet we

have not ceased, nor can we cease, to regard the Bible as a book—indeed, as *The Book*. Again, we often refer to it as the *Word* of God. What may we learn from these three interestingly different ways of looking at the Bible?

1. As a *Library* the Bible contains a collection of books whose composition covered a period of many hundreds of years. These books vary a great deal in character, representing many different literary forms—mythology, history, laws, prophetic oracles, poetry, drama, apocalyptic, letters, gospels, and so on. As books they are in many respects very like the rest of the world's books. They were written by human authors, each of whom lived in a particular setting of time and place; and consequently each book bears, to a greater or lesser extent, the stamp of its period and reflects the personality of its author. The Biblical authors adopted the same methods of writing and publishing their works as did their contemporaries in other literary spheres. The books were copied by hand, and neither the scribes who performed this monotonous task nor the translators who later rendered the books into other languages were always infallible.

And so the Bible, no less than other literary classics inherited from the past, became—invariably and quite properly—a field of research for textual, literary and historical critics. It has been examined in the most thorough and detailed manner, in order to discover as accurately as possible the answers to such questions as the following. Who wrote each book, and when, and in what circumstances? What sources did he use? What were his exact words, and what did he mean by them, and what meaning did they have for their first readers? The Bible has nothing to fear from honest scientific criticism of this kind, for truth is one and indivisible, and therefore that which is true need never fear the truth. We may gladly admit that the Bible consists of a whole Library, and gratefully welcome all knowledge concerning the Library's contents.

2. Nevertheless, for all the literary variety represented in its contents, the Bible is marked by an unmistakable unity which renders it not inappropriate to speak of it as a *Book*. It would be possible to make a collection of the outstanding classics of a particular language and nation and to bind them all together in a single volume. The very fact that it was all the product of a common culture would give the volume a quite definite unity. The Bible, of course, is marked by a unity of this nature; but it possesses also a unity that goes deeper, and is far more significant than that. The ground of this unity is the fact that all the books of the Bible are concerned with a common subject. They are all concerned with

the Living God, and together they tell the story of God's mighty activity in the salvation of the world. And this fact not only unites them with one another, but also sets them apart from all the rest of the world's books. However great may be the similarities which we noticed between the Biblical literature and the rest of the literature of the ancient world, the essential difference that distinguishes them from it is of far greater significance, for there are no other books which deal, in the same direct manner as do the Biblical books, with the story of God's saving and self-revealing activity in history. This story is unfolded in the Bible because the Bible is the religious literature of the particular nation which God chose to be the medium of His self-revelation. The various books of the Bible are all, so to speak, chapters in this developing story of God's dealings with His chosen People, and it is in what they have to say on this subject, and not in the accuracy of what they have to say on scientific and historical questions, that their real authority lies.

The Bible as a Book, then, is the record of a single continuous and coherent process of divine revelation. This means that, although the individual books which it contains are all the works of human authors and were all composed in historical circumstances of time and place, there is to be heard in them the voice of the Living God, and through them there may be received a message from the eternal world. To this extent, our fathers were not so wide of the mark when they spoke of the Holy Spirit as the 'Author' of the Bible (however mistaken they may have been in supposing that the Spirit had dictated the whole, word for word, to passive human writers). Might we not say that, whereas the books which constitute the Biblical Library (looked at merely as books) are the works of several human authors, the Book which they unite to form is the work of a single Divine Author?

3. What of the Bible as the *Word of God*? We have seen that the Bible is a Book because it tells a single story, and that this story is the work of a Divine Author who through it communicates a message of eternal significance to men. This message may be called the Word of God to men. And since it is recorded in the Bible, and since it is this Word that gives to the Bible its uniqueness and authority, it is not unnatural for us to use the expression 'Word of God' to denote the Bible as such.

Another way of saying that the Bible records the single message which constitutes God's Word to men is to say that the great unifying theme of the Bible is Jesus Christ. In our text Jesus claims that the essential purpose of the Scriptures

is to bear witness of Himself. He is referring, of course, to the Scriptures of the Old Testament; but the statement can obviously be extended to cover those of the New Testament also. The witness of the Old Testament is one of *promise*, and that of the New Testament one of *fulfilment*. And the witness of each Testament is necessary if we are really to know Christ and properly to understand the significance of His Person, life and work. To the writers of the New Testament Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of all the prophecies and promises of the Old Testament; and the plain fact is that the New is unintelligible unless read against the background of the Old. But it is equally true that the Old Testament cannot be understood satisfactorily except in the light of the New, for it continually looks forward to something beyond itself, and it is only in the New Testament that that something—the last act which contains the clue to the understanding of the whole play—may be found. Jesus Christ Himself is thus the key that opens the Scriptures of the Old Testament and reveals their true meaning and abiding message.

Jesus Christ Himself, the 'Word of God incarnate', in His unconditional and absolute Lordship, is the one source of ultimate authority in Christianity. In Him God has told men everything He wants to tell them, and everything they need to be told. No one and nothing else possesses authority save in a derivative sense. To the extent that the Bible or the Church or what the Quaker calls 'the Inner Light' represents faithfully the Mind and Spirit of Christ, to that extent authority attaches to it. This does not mean, however, that we can dispense with these derivative authorities. We cannot by-pass them and go direct to the ultimate seat of authority Himself. The way to Jesus Christ lies not *past* them but *through* them. The Bible, like the Church and the Inner Witness of the Spirit in our minds and hearts, is a divinely-appointed means of grace through which God in Christ addresses us and reveals His mind and will to us. And so, as we study the Bible, we are not consulting a kind of 'spiritual ready-reckoner' which will automatically give us the infallible answers to all our problems. Rather are we entering into personal and vital touch with the Divine Person to whom has been given all authority in heaven and upon earth. We search the Scriptures, not because we think that *in them* as such we have eternal life, but because *through them* we may come to Him of whom they bear witness, and by coming to Him we have life. If we neglect the Scriptures we turn our backs upon the main highway that leads to Christ; and nothing then remains for us but aimless wandering.

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

A Three-Dimensional Gospel

BY THE REVEREND JOHN R. GRAY, V.R.D., B.D.,
TH.M., GLASGOW

'God; Who hath saved us . . . in Christ Jesus before the world began, . . . is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.'—2 Ti 1⁸⁻¹⁰.

Christmas is about God, not about Baby Jesus. It is only where God appears that there is real hope and real joy. It is the forgetfulness of this, and the concentration year after year on the birth of the human Baby Jesus, that has led us into the jejune materialism which is apt to characterize this season of the year. You know how it is. Out comes last year's tinsel, a little more tarnished; the perpetual Christmas tree (nauseating production!) has its plastic and nylon washed and shaken out; the cards and presents are prepared for the people on the same carefully preserved lists; the same meretricious 'pop' songs grind out their plea for a 'White Christmas' from every big store; the sellers of rich food and drink prepare for their biggest 'kill' of the year; Santa Clauses in varying degrees of disrepair proliferate in every city.

It is not that there is anything wrong with a feast, but there is a measure in everything which, being passed, a change takes place in the thing itself. And this has happened to Christmas. It has become a stylised, materialistic orgy of buying, eating, and drinking. The only remedy is to begin afresh with God and to see Christmas, so to speak, in a three-dimensional way; not as something that happened long ago, but as something which arose in the beginning, is happening now, and has relevance to the end. If we see it thus, each Christmas will be different, for each will be a different distance from the beginning—and from the end.

1. 'God . . . who hath saved us in Christ Jesus before the world began.' How? How could God have saved us before we were lost, before we even existed, before the world began? The world had to come into being. The mighty wheels of pre-history and history had to roll on. The child Jesus had to be born, grow up, heal and teach, the tension develop, and the opposition mount, the conflict in Pilate's soul had to be fought out before ever the words 'It is finished' could be spoken from the Cross. Then century after century had to pass before a man and a maid could meet and marry, before at last you and I could be born.

How could God have saved us in Christ Jesus before the world began? Let a homely illustration suffice! An old lady told me not long ago that she had chosen the names for her children, and had all her plans made for them long before anyone had even asked her to marry. And God had His wonderful plans for each one of us before He first made man and woman. When He did make man, and gave him the perilous gift of freedom, He had allowed for the misuse of it, and had decided that He would go the length of the Incarnation and the Crucifixion to save man from the consequences of his sin. Jesus did not come into the world to overturn the plan of God. He came to fulfil it. He is the culmination and the completion of the redemptive purpose of God. 'God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son . . . by whom also he made the worlds.' The first chapter of Genesis and the first chapter of St. Matthew are linked. All things that were to be, the whole of redemption history, were in some sort present in the heart of God from the beginning.

2. And yet, of course, Christ was born only in the fullness of time. However long some event may be foreseen, however eagerly longed for, however confidently counted on, it has not happened until it has indeed taken place. To know that one is going to be married or to go abroad or to start a new job is not the same as being actually married or actually sailing or actually facing the first day of the new work. A baby is expected for months, but that does not diminish in the least the fresh wonder of the new-born life. Although since God is as God is, and Man is as he is, Christ was inevitable, there was no compulsion on God to send Him, save the compulsion of His own love. From man's point of view, Christ's coming was the utterly unexpected. That God should become Man, that eternity should be found in time, this was not to be looked for, could not be counted on. In joy there is always an element of complete surprise, and part of the joy of Advent is the ever old, yet completely new and surprising realization that God has burst into our condemned and dejected world. It is for this that 'the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now', hardly daring to hope that the incredible will indeed come to pass. But God, who hath saved us in Christ Jesus before the world began, is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

3. The past, full of God's gracious purposes, is complemented by the present with His gracious revelation of them. But the future, with its

inevitable death, casts its shadow backwards upon us all. Only in Christ do we discover why that shadow is as black as it is. It is because of the brightness of the light on the other side of death. Just as Christmas looks back to the glory of the Creation, so it looks forward to the brightness of the Consummation.

Jesus Christ, who came to make manifest the love of God, grew up and lived and died and rose again to bring life and immortality to light. We are apt to be particularly sorry for those whose friends die at this season. Should we be if the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ was for the purpose of abolishing death, and if He has indeed 'brought life and immortality to light'? It is this promise of that which is to come which gives Advent and Christmas their true glory, 'It's a great time for the children', we say. No doubt it is, but there were no children, save Christ, at the Nativity. The Shepherds, the Wise Men, Simeon and Anna, were all grown up, if not old. Children are this-worldly little creatures who rarely worry about the Life Everlasting. This hour's joy or this hour's troubles fill their little minds. It is the old who hunger for the consolation that is not yet. It is we, who can look back with regret, who look forward most. We know, most of us, that we shall leave this life unfinished, with our dreams mostly unfulfilled, and our dearest hopes unsatisfied. It is we who need the other dimension of life of which the Advent gospel speaks. It is we who need help as we battle for serenity amidst life's daunting facts and sad defeats.

In some ways, of course, the children are nearer the truth than we, for they are nearer God. They behave as if life had no end. In Christ it has not. 'Whosoever liveth and believeth in me', He said, 'shall never die'. They believe that their fondest wishes will be fulfilled. So they will be, for He has said 'It is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom'. They believe in peace on earth, goodwill towards men. In Christ these things shall be victorious when all things shall have been brought under His feet. The children are not ignoring reality. They are seeing through it to the greater reality on the other side. To some extent we may make common cause with them. Although we cannot ignore death, sorrow, sin or pain, we can face these things, and our own sorry record, in the light of God. Although we cannot save ourselves we can rejoice, because God saved us in Christ Jesus before the world began. We can rejoice because this is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ. In our joy there need be no tiny tincture of fear for He hath abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Uncomplicated Christians

BY THE REVEREND DAVID H. C. READ, D.D.,
NEW YORK

'But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.'—Mt 5³⁷.

The first poem that I ever learned by heart as a boy, without being made to, was Macaulay's 'Horatius at the Bridge' from his 'Lays of Ancient Rome'.

Lars Porsena of Clusium
By the nine gods he swore
That the great house of Tarquin
Should suffer wrong no more.

'By the nine gods he swore it . . .' and so on it went. 'By the nine gods'—this was something beyond the experience of a small boy in Edinburgh; this must have been a resounding and blood-curdling oath.

At that time I imagined, as many people still do, that when the Bible warns against swearing it refers to the vulgar or mildly blasphemous words with which we are tempted to express our irritation, or enliven an otherwise dull story. No doubt our Lord would have something to say about this habit—and a good deal more about our state of mind than the actual words we use—but when He said 'Swear not at all' He was not referring to the kind of oath that Lars Porsena swore. What Jesus protested against was not the vehemence of the language but the fact that a man feels it necessary to underscore his simple word. That should be enough.

We are rightly scandalized to-day when a man or woman lies under oath. Jesus was scandalized that we should need to take an oath at all to prove that we are not lying. In His Kingdom Yes means Yes and No means No: and these words need no collateral.

It was very different in the world He lived in. In those days there was a fascinating variety of names by which a man could swear. To use God's sacred name was, of course, the most binding. To swear by heaven or earth was less so; by Jerusalem less again, and by one's head the least binding of all. Jesus sweeps away these absurd gradations with the observation that they all really amount to the same thing—namely, calling on the Creator as witness to one's oath. For heaven is God's throne and earth His footstool; Jerusalem His holy city, and our heads just what God has given us—'Thou canst not make one hair white or black' (still ultimately, if

not cosmetically true!). His demand is that we use plain words that need no oath for reinforcement. Our text reads in the Greek quite simply: 'Let your word be *Yes* or *No*.' 'Whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.'

What a light this throws not just on the ancient world of curious oaths but on the world in which we live. For the blunt fact is that we can't get along without oaths and emphases and exaggerations and circumlocutions.

The Sermon on the Mount reveals here, as elsewhere, the contrast between the clear bright light of God's Kingdom and the twilight world in which we actually live. Jesus knows all about this twilight world and He is not offering a series of rules and regulations to be immediately and literally adopted. Some have boldly attempted such literal obedience and have refused to take an oath in a court of law. Jesus gave us not a law but a Spirit to live by—the spirit of an informed and understanding love. If I were to be rung up to-morrow morning by a gentleman in San Francisco trying to persuade me to speak there at a conference next month, I should be acting entirely in literal obedience to our text if I said 'Nay' and hung up. But something would be lacking in the sphere of Christian love!

What good, then, does this teaching do? Surely it has an immense relevance to our daily life by exposing the evil in which we are all involved, and pointing to the direction in which a Christian ought to move.

Something is wrong with our 'communication'. That is obvious. We are far removed from a free and open encounter with one another that can be expressed by a clean Yes or No. When nations talk, the language of diplomacy wraps up agreements and refusals in an elegant package of circumlocution. When public figures talk, a thousand commentators are employed to speculate not on what they say but upon what they really mean. Advertisers have travelled so far from the land of Yea and Nay that we need a new vocabulary to interpret their claims.

Worse still is the complication of personal relations in all areas, whereby friends and associates, employers and employees, parents and children, even husband and wife find road-blocks on the path of communication.

It is all so clearly pictured in the Genesis story of the Fall. The Garden of Eden is the land of the clean and unadulterated Yes and No. Man and woman are open to God, open to each other. Then comes the serpent. When this has done its work, then trust is broken and man can no longer look God in the face and utter his simple Yes and No. Listen to him: 'The *woman* thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree . . .'. 'And

the Lord God said unto the woman, what is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, the *serpent* beguiled me . . .' And so it goes—the verbiage of self-excuse.

The new life that Christ has brought to mankind has to do with exactly this situation. The new humanity He is calling into being is a family restored to the simplicities of a trust in God and unclouded honesty among men.

We are complicated Christians, most of us, to-day. We need to hear this word—'But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay'—for our communication gets clogged and we cease to talk simply and honestly to God or to our fellow-men. Even in our religion we tend to make the gospel a problem and the Christian life a series of dilemmas. God knows it is not easy to understand all the Bible has to say, and harder still to know just what is the Christian answer to the many problems of our day. But Christ did not come like the scribes to 'bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders'. On the contrary, He said: 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest'. He does not give us rest from the task of understanding our faith and applying it to the life of everyday. But He does give us rest from the exhausting effort of hiding from God in the trees of our garden, and the nagging task of justifying and excusing ourselves before men. It is here at the centre He uncomplicates us and sets us on the path to the fullness of His Kingdom.

We have at home a large glass tank where some tropical fish are. Every now and then when I look at the tank I find the water cloudy and dull and the foliage rank and overgrown. Then next day the water is crystal clear, and the fish darting about with all their colours radiant in the light and purity of their little world. What has happened? Someone—not me—has cleaned the tank.

If I see a new clarity, a new simplicity, a new honesty in the world, in the nation, in the church, in the home, in my own heart, I know that someone—not me—has cleaned the tank. Christ is at work. This *is* His work—to uncomplicate us and bring us back to the simplicities of trust and love.

Whatever else seems hard—or even impossible—about His demand for the pure and unadulterated Yes and No, there is one place where such a response is open to us all. It is His presence.

The gospel is God's great Yes to man—Yes, I will receive you and forgive you; yes, I will empower you so that Christ will dwell in you; yes, I will guide you through the rough and the smooth to the eternal Kingdom. But to hear that Yes, and to know its purifying power, we must utter our simple Yes to Him.

Recent Foreign Theology

Essays on the Old Testament. A volume of collected essays on the Old Testament by Professor G. von Rad will be welcomed by many readers.¹ The first, and longest, of these studies appeared as a monograph in 1938. The others have been published in various journals and *Festschriften*, where they are not easy of access to many readers. A quarter of the present volume is occupied by the first study, which is devoted to a form-critical examination of the Hexateuch. Fourteen other studies are here collected, of which it must suffice to indicate the titles of some which the present writer finds most interesting. Within the area of Hexateuchal studies there are essays on 'Promised Land and Yahweh's Land in the Hexateuch' and on 'The Joseph Saga and Early Hokmah'—the latter a paper read to the International Old Testament Congress at Copenhagen. There are papers on 'The Royal Ritual of Judah', on 'Righteousness and Life in the Cultic language of the Psalms', and on 'The Theological Problem of the Old Testament Creation Belief'. In the field of historiography 'The Beginnings of Historical Writing in Ancient Israel' and 'The Deuteronomistic Theology of History in the Books of Kings' are dealt with, while an essay on 'Job 38 and Ancient Egyptian Wisdom' returns to the subject of the Wisdom Literature. These and other papers make a volume of varied interest. Professor von Rad is one of the most outstanding Old Testament scholars to-day, who combines a penetrating theological insight with exact technical study of the Old Testament, and it is not surprising that he exercises a wide influence in his own country and beyond.

The War Scroll. The first translation of the whole of the War Scroll, found in the first of the Qumran caves, was made by Professor J. van der Ploeg, of Nijmegen. This scholar has now published an important monograph on this text, in which he offers a revised translation, taking account of the work of the many other writers who have translated it or discussed it, together with an introduction and a full commentary.² There is a careful discussion of the number of lines which may be conjectured to have been lost from the bottom of the manuscript, and of the probable date of

composition of the work. The author gives a full account of the variety of opinions that have been expressed on the dating and unity of the work. He inclines to think that it is of composite origin, but writes cautiously in the hope that greater certainty may be attained when the unpublished fragments from Cave IV are published. He is doubtful of Yadin's claim that the Scroll reflects Roman military tactics, and thinks that it more probably shows the influence of the military experience which the Jews gained in the Maccabean wars. Its composition is placed some time after the Book of Daniel, since van der Ploeg thinks the author sought to modify the expectations of the Book of Daniel when experience had failed to realize them. An interesting section of the introduction is devoted to the theology of the Scroll. Nearly three-quarters of the volume is taken up with the commentary on the text, where the reader will learn not only the author's views on the innumerable problems of interpretation, but also the views of other scholars. For the further study of this text no student can dispense with this book.

Qumran Exegesis. Professor F. F. Bruce, of Sheffield, gave some lectures in Dutch universities on the Dead Sea Scrolls, and these formed the basis of a small book which has been published in Holland under the title *Biblical Exegesis in the Qumran texts*.³ This is written in English and will be welcomed by many who have already learned to appreciate Professor Bruce's judicious writings on the Scrolls. It is an examination of the methods adopted by the Qumran sectaries in the interpretation of the Biblical text, which they frequently apply to their own times, and sometimes alter in the interests of that application. Particularly interesting is the chapter on the Servant of the Lord and the Son of Man. Professor Bruce thinks the Qumran sectaries interpreted the Servant's mission in terms of their own mission, and suggests that while a Messianic significance was given to the Servant it was of the priestly Messiah that they thought, rather than of the Davidic Messiah. Another important chapter is devoted to Biblical exegesis in the Scrolls and in the New Testament. The New Testament applies many Old Testament passages to Christ, as the Qumran sectaries apply many to themselves or to the Teacher of Righteousness. Nevertheless, important differences are also underlined. Professor Bruce observes that for the

¹ *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament* (Theologische Bücherei, vol. 8) [1958]. Kaiser Verlag, Munich; DM. 12.

² *Le Rouleau de la Guerre* ('Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah', vol. 2) [1959]. Brill, Leiden; Fl. 25.

³ Published by Van Keulen, The Hague, in the series, *Exegetica*, III, i. Price: Fl. 4.75.

Church 'Jesus has fulfilled the ancient promises, and in fulfilling them He has given them a new meaning, in which their original meaning is not set aside but caught up into something more comprehensive and far-reaching than was foreseen before He came'. Altogether this is a rewarding study.

The Hebrew word Nephesh. Over a long period the Hebrew word *nephesh* has commanded the interest of scholars, and several important studies have been devoted to it. The Finnish scholar, A. Murtonen, has now entered this field with a monograph written in English.¹ His method is to classify the Biblical occurrences of the term in four chapters and then to examine the etymology and semasiology of the term. He holds that the primary meaning of the word is 'the living and acting being of its possessor' from which all the other meanings have been developed, and the meaning 'throat', which is found in some passages in the Old Testament and which the cognate Akkadian *napištu* sometimes has, is held to be derived from this. Much careful work has gone into this study, which will certainly be used by future students of this word. At the end Dr. Murtonen gives a complete list of passages of the Old Testament where the word *nephesh* occurs, arranged in the order of the Hebrew Bible, with symbols indicating the various groups under which he classifies them. The study is dedicated to the distinguished Danish Professor, Johannes Pedersen, to mark his seventy-fifth birthday.

Immortality. Four radio talks on immortality, given in German at Beromünster, have been translated into French and published in a small volume.² The first is by the Dominican N. M. Luyten, and it emphasizes that for the Roman Catholic immortality is a divine promise, guaranteed by the resurrection of Christ. Next a biologist, A. Portmann, deals with the limitations of biological science, which cannot define the origin or the destiny of living beings, and emphasizes the mystery which surrounds us. Then a philosopher, Karl Jaspers, approaches the subject from the standpoint of philosophy, and maintains that immortality is something to be achieved through love and the search for the good. Finally, Karl Barth writes as a Protestant theologian of the Biblical promise of immortality to those whom God in Christ saves. An important element of Biblical thought does not seem to be noted. This links the hope of immortality to a present experi-

ence. Paul says 'I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me', and the Fourth Gospel says 'He that believeth *hath* everlasting life' and 'The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life'. He who has this experience is more assured of immortality than by all the world's philosophers or theologians. When he is lifted into the life and purpose of God in Christ, he has confidence that he will live, because the abiding God is the source of his life.

Ancient Semitic Deities. The University of Rome has commenced a new series of *Studi Semitici* with a volume on *Ancient Semitic Deities*, edited by Professor S. Moscati.³ After a brief introduction by the editor, J. Bottéro contributes a chapter on Mesopotamian deities, written in French, M. H. Dahood a chapter in English on Syrian and Palestinian deities, and W. Caskell a chapter in German on Arabian deities. The concluding chapter, written like the introduction in Italian, is by the editor. The volume seeks to establish the nature of the ancient Semitic pantheon in the light of our present knowledge. Of particular interest to the Biblical student is Dahood's chapter, which explains very clearly why the Ras Shamra texts are drawn on for the understanding of Canaanite religion. In Mari the pantheon included Sumerian and Babylonian deities, whereas the proper names show that the local gods were Amorite. Similarly in Ugarit, the ancient name of Ras Shamra, the gods who figure in the mythological texts are more than those who were worshipped in the city itself, and were almost certainly the gods of a much wider district. Archaeologically it can be established that there was a common culture in the whole of the area of Palestine and Syria, and Anat, who figures so prominently in the Ras Shamra texts, had a temple at Gaza and appears in the name of Jeremiah's birthplace, Anathoth. Similarly Dagon had temples in the Philistine towns. It is, of course, quite unnecessary to suppose that the writers of the Old Testament were familiar with the actual texts which have been found at Ras Shamra, but much in the Old Testament is illuminated in the light of the mythology which is preserved in these texts. The purpose of the present volume is not to illuminate the Old Testament, however, but to see how far we can get back behind the varying forms of the pantheon of the three areas covered to a common basis in the religion of the entire area.

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¹ *The Living Soul (Studia Orientalia, XXIII. i.)* [1958]. Finnish Oriental Society, Helsinki.

² *Immortalité*, tr. by H. Naef [1958]. Delachaux et Niestlé, Neuchâtel and Paris; Swiss Fr. 4.—

³ *Le antiche divinità semitiche* [1958]. Istituto di Studi Orientali, Università, Rome; Lire 3000, bound 3500.

Entre Nous

How and What to Preach

There are some books of sermons which show us at one and the same time what to preach and how to preach it. Such a book is *Point of Glad Return* by the Rev. Lance Webb (Abingdon Press; \$3.50).

Dr. Webb defines his objectives. 'The purpose of this book is to interpret in simple language the ways in which present, personal confrontation of God in Christ saves us from the frustrations of emptiness, boredom, loneliness, self-pity, fear, and guilt, caused by our off-centred, out-of-joint attitudes which for want of a better name must still be called sin; how this confrontation of God in Christ transforms not only the difficult, dark experiences over which we have no control, but also our ambition, success, and laughter into life that is not only bearable, but beautiful and eternally worth living'. As Clement of Alexandria said: 'He changes our sunsets into dawns!'. To this end this book is divided into three sections—Christ and your Frustrations, Christ and your Success, Christ and your Human Frailty, in which last section the things which cannot be evaded, illness, pain, sorrow, and death, are dealt with. This, then, is what this book sets out to preach. Dr. Webb's skill as a preacher stands out in the way he presents his material. Let us take some examples.

There are three things which Christ gives to us: 1. A satisfying friendship with God. 2. A deep and worthy purpose that gives significant meaning to life and relates us in harmony and love with our fellows. 3. An adequacy of strength and power to meet all the demands of purposeful living and dying with serenity and victory of joyous love.

One of the great basic ills of this age is loneliness. To meet this loneliness men and women construct substitute and unreal religions. 1. There is *the religion of fantasy*, in which people try to escape loneliness by identifying themselves with characters in the movies, the radio, the television plays, and even in the comic strips. 2. There is *the religion of infantilism*, in which a grown adult wants nothing but a mother's arms, and makes his faith and his prayer a way of escaping reality and responsibility, and a way of evading his own inadequacies. 3. There is *the religion of materialism*, in which the heart is set on money and on things, while it is forgotten that money is helpless to buy the most important things. It was said of the wealthy Sinclair Lewis: 'The one thing he could not buy was companionship'. Rich he might be, but he was 'a pauper in comradeship'. 4. There is *the religion of social approval*. People join a lodge, a club, or even a church to win the approval of others. The only way to conquer loneliness and to make it creative is to remember and admit

that there is a place in the human heart which only God can fill.

Dr. Webb has an excellent examination of what forgiveness is not and is. Forgiveness is not forgetting what has happened. You can neither forget a bad conscience nor a bad act. Forgiveness is not merely confessing one's sins and inadequacies. Confession may bring things out into the open but by itself it cannot heal them. Forgiveness is not indifference and unconcern. These may be no more than the failure to realize the seriousness of sin. Forgiveness is not the cancelling of a penalty, or the release from punishment. A great deal of the punishment for sin is inflicted on a man by himself, and no one can escape the personal and communal consequences of an act of sin. Forgiveness is not a solemn act of pardon, like a judge's pronouncement of a verdict of 'Not guilty'. 'Forgiveness', said George Bernard Shaw, understanding the word in that sense, 'is a beggar's refuge. Man must pay his debts.' What then is forgiveness? The forgiveness which Christ offers and expects of each of us toward others is a restored relationship, a reunion with those we have wronged, a reconciliation, first with God and then with others, which restores our self-respect and confidence in each other. Forgiveness is the participation in eternal love which enables us to accept ourselves as known and loved and worthy of a new beginning.

Dr. Webb is a master of the unhackneyed and effective illustration. He quotes an unknown writer's recipe for 'How to be Miserable'.

Think about yourself.

Talk about yourself. Use 'I' as often as possible.

Mirror yourself continually in the opinion of others.

Listen greedily to what people say about you.

Expect to be appreciated.

Be jealous and envious.

Be sensitive to slights.

Never forgive a criticism.

Trust nobody but yourself.

Insist on consideration and respect.

Sulk if people are not grateful for favours shown them.

Be on the look-out for a good time for yourself.

Love yourself supremely.

It might not be true to say that this is a book of great sermons, but there can be few books of sermons which are better examples of the craftsman's art.

WILLIAM BARCLAY

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